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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

IN ITS

ORIGIN, PROGRESS, AND PERFECTION

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BY

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PREFACE.

THE leading truths of the following Work have already been laid before my Congregation in Lectures delivered on the Fridays of Lent 1858, 1859, 1860, and 1861. The materials of the four parts are now arranged so as to form a systematic Treatise on "The Christian Life, in its Origin, Progress, and Perfection." The volume is presented to my flock for their more deliberate consideration, with a pastor's best wishes and a pastor's earnest blessing.

I am not entirely without hope that this treatise may, under divine aid, create in its readers such an interest in the questions discussed, as will excite a wish to consult abler volumes, and lead them to seek a closer acquaintance with the great writers of English theology, who will supply a more profound and convincing exposition of the whole subject of the

Christian life. The second and third Parts have, in substance, been published as separate treatises, entitled "Diversities of Christian Character," and "Diversities of Faults in Christian Believers." They are now republished in connection with the subject of "The Christian Life," because I have long been convinced that sufficient weight has not always been attached to the influence of natural temperament and disposition in forming and directing the religious character. The varied external circumstances of an earthly lot—the great differences that prevail in the mental qualities and powers of men, as well as in their natural tastes and predilections—the different temptations connected with particular faults to which they have a constitutional tendency, or, as the apostle expresses it, with the "sins which do most easily beset them,"—demand a most careful self-examination in wayfaring Christians themselves, and require from Christian teachers an accurate discrimination between the classes of persons whom they address, so as to adapt and suit their lessons to the circumstances of each. A Christian teacher, if he would impress religious truths deeply and practically upon men's minds, *must* take these

diversities into account. No one has a more urgent call to study human nature, under all its varieties of circumstance, than the Christian minister, who will find that appeals, exhortations, and remonstrances, which are well adapted to hearers of one class, may be quite unsuited to hearers of other classes. He must be acquainted with peculiarities of human nature under all its phases, and be able to detect what particular points in individual characters are most likely to be exposed to danger.

In one word, it is the purport of this treatise on practical Christian ethics to exhibit the inner or spiritual Christian life as an important, tangible reality—to describe it as a great and glorious object to be attained only by diligent self-denial, unwearied perseverance, and resolute determination — to encourage all who have resolved to enter upon such a course, that they may pursue it with energy and hope, so that their efforts to attain success may not falter under temptation or discouragement, but may have that systematic continuance in well-doing which, under divine grace, shall be "*faithful unto death.*"

EDINBURGH, *March* 1862.

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PART I.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

PART FIRST.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN ITS VARIOUS RELATIONS TO THE WORLDLY LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

TWOFOLD LIFE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN.

I PURPOSE in the following pages to treat of that course of life which every one is supposed to run who is a follower of his blessed Lord and Master. I would describe and illustrate the nature and character of the strictly *spiritual* life of the Christian believer—point out some of those obstacles by which its growth is frequently impeded—and show how ofttimes its heavenward course is arrested by earth-born passions and selfish indulgences. Looking for the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, without which learning and talent are alike in vain, and *with* whose aid the meanest instrument may be made subservient to some good to the souls of men, it will be my

endeavour, in these remarks, to fix the attention of my readers on the discriminating features of the CHRISTIAN LIFE — that life which every one who professes to receive Christ as his Redeemer, guide, and example, is supposed to lead whilst a pilgrim in a world of trial and temptation—that course which he is supposed to pursue as a member of the Church—different from, although in many respects closely associated with, the more obvious life which he leads as a member of civil society, as an inhabitant of *this* world, engaged in its affairs, and mixed up with its various interests and objects. This portion of the existence of every true follower and disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ has been happily termed, by a pious writer of the Scottish Episcopal Church, "The life of God in the soul of man;" and in expounding this definition, and in showing what I mean should actually form the subject of the following chapters, I would first, guided by Scripture language, bring the question forward as a distinct object of Scripture representation. According, then, to the doctrine laid down in the teaching of inspired apostles, every one's present existence may be said to consist of *two lives*, both of which he has to follow out in the actual business of life. One belongs to the present world, and one belongs to the future world. One life is occupied with the concerns of time—the other is inseparably mixed up with the interests of eternity. One life terminates with the grave, and closes in death; but the other life is carried on, and survives beyond the tomb. It is an immortal life, and *cannot* die.

It is quite evident that St Paul refers to this life in Gal. ii. 20. Having used the words, "I am crucified with Christ," an expression frequently applied by himself to signify a death or dying to sin, he adds, to prevent misapprehension, "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." There was a life in the flesh—*i.e.*, a life *within* the ordinary corporeal life of the apostle—and THAT life he lived by faith; its objects were invisible to the eye of flesh—its existence is drawn, not from material, but from spiritual organisation.

Again, the same apostle, at Col. iii. 3, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." As regards the material or external life, every Christian believer has become dead or insensible to its baneful fascinations and evil tendencies. But then, with this dying to sin he has commenced a *new* life to holiness, different from his natural life. There is a Christian life begun in him, which "life is *hid* with Christ in God," and is hidden—*i.e.*, concealed from the world; it is an inner and a spiritual life, known only to God and to him who lives it. Now the inquiry which I should most desire to awaken in every reader is, that he may ask how far he has himself entered upon this spiritual course? What steps he has already taken to mature the spiritual path that leads to God? Let each one ask, What *progress* have I made in the Christian life? Have I determined on commencing a life *for* God, and not for self only?

Have I resolved to persevere in it, and carry it on from strength to strength—to overcome its difficulties, and clear off the obstacles that so often hinder its advancement and retard its perfection? Have I resolved to press on, and at last to triumph over all the obstacles and hindrances that impede the pilgrim's path through the strait gate and narrow way that are to bring him to the land of peace and rest? We talk of diversities of Christian characters; but, alas! how different are the histories of mankind in regard to their estimate of the Christian life, and their determination and efforts to pursue it! Some, we fear, have hardly given a thought to the question, momentous as it is. They are bewildered when the subject of the Christian life is pressed upon their notice; they consider all such representations as something bordering upon the mystical or the fanatical—at any rate, as visionary or impracticable. They have no notion of any life, but of the life which is occupied with the business of this world—the interests they have to pursue, the enjoyments they have to secure in its onward course. Their impressions of religion are associated with professions of belief in a certain orthodox code of theological opinions—with attention to certain outward religious forms, and attendance upon certain religious services. But the daily spiritual life of the Christian, as a real life in itself, having its own difficulties and its own trials—its hidden conflicts and secret joys—its taking up and bearing a cross—its following Christ in self-denial, and in imitation of His blessed example, and imbibing His blessed

Spirit—this is what they do not know, and what they have no desire or intention of pursuing. All their interests, their feelings, and their anxieties, are bounded by the objects which are around them. The present life, with its cares and amusements, occupy their wishes, and occupy them entirely. With a class of mankind—and a considerable class—therefore, the teacher on this great question of the Christian life has to enforce the duty and the necessity of making a COMMENCEMENT. To those of his hearers who are really acquainted with this inner life of Christian piety, the preacher will seem to be dealing with the first elements of religion, and telling them of things with which *they* have long been familiar. But we often require to speak as to those who have yet little experience of an inner life, or little anxiety about entering upon its real business, and carrying forward its real objects. Many have to be awakened and aroused, so as to *begin* in earnest a spiritual course of thought and action.

Dr Paley, indeed, with his usual straightforward, practical, and somewhat homely style of dealing with the statement of facts, has, in his sermon upon "Seriousness in Religion," made the following declaration:—"There are grown men and women—nay, even middle-aged persons—who have not thought seriously about religion an hour, or a quarter of an hour, in the whole course of their lives. This great object of human solicitude affects not them in any manner whatever." This is a strong statement certainly, and yet Paley was an acute observer of mankind, and lived much in the society of his time. One

would fain hope that in the present day there is a deeper interest in serious religion than prevailed in Paley's time. Still we cannot conceal from ourselves that the Christian ministry, in their pastoral addresses, have but too often to deal with the case of those who are altogether uninformed or indifferent on the question of an inner and spiritual life different from their daily walk and conversation on the earth—who have to be aroused to a sense of its importance, and urged to come to Christ out of the world—to *take* the yoke and bear the burden of a crucified Redeemer.

There are many popular and well-known treatises specially addressed to this state of mind—addresses which contain appeals to the consciences of men, and invitations to consider the dangers of their indifference and apathy. As has been observed, sermons are often written for this purpose, and have been blessed by God to awaken the careless, and to make men thoughtful and inquiring. Experience proves also beyond a doubt that God's blessing has followed the reading of such works as Scougal's "Life of God in the Soul of Man," Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," Law's "Serious Call," Allein's "Alarm to the Unconverted," Augustine's "Confessions," "The Force of Truth" by J. Scott, Rutherford's "Practical Piety," and others of the same class. Preachers and writers, therefore, require in their remarks to have reference to what we fear is a large class of mankind—those, namely, who have not yet begun to live the Christian life at all—who have never been induced seriously to consider its importance,

either to examine the question for themselves, or to weigh impartially all the personal interests and responsibilities which it implies. They have to consider also another, and too common a case, of those who have information on the subject, and who even profess to have a sense of its responsibility, and a desire to show forth in themselves the graces and the virtues of a truly Christian life and character, but whose *progress* in it is doubtful, whose step is uncertain. These require to be urged and strengthened in the course. Motives to perseverance must be constantly laid before them, and the apostolic exhortation urged again and again: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Again, the case of persons is to be considered who are really desirous of following the ascending path of God's service, and who are bringing forth the fruits of piety and virtue, but who have their besetting sins—who have their weak moments; so that there is for them a constant need of the warning to "take heed lest they fall." Such persons require that constant advice and correction needful to the almost but not altogether Christian character. Something always intervenes to prevent in them the full attainment of holiness and of disinterested piety, which God will enable His sincere and devoted children to reach even in this world. But blessed be God, there are others who have attained, under God's grace and their diligent fervent use of it, that advancement and security in the Christian life which inspire the full and confident hope that they will attain everlasting salvation.

We feel almost certain and assured that they will keep the faith, and fight the good fight—will finish their course with joy, and at last inherit the crown of glory. Their names are, we humbly believe, written in the book of life, as we know their names are recorded in the annals of the Church below. Of these many will not be known till we all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Some are now upon the earth, striving against sin; some have departed, but they wait in realms of rest and peace the full consummation of their bliss, when their bodies shall rise from the grave—when the corruptible shall become incorruptible, the mortal be clothed with immortality. In this class of persons, we doubt not, the Christian life has become a reality, and a successful struggle with trial and temptation; and as to them it has been Christ to *live*, so with them it will be gain to *die*. And yet of these—even of the Christians now living with such determinations for the present, and with such glorious hopes for the future—there may still be wanting some consolation and encouragement, some warning and instruction: the faith may at times seem shaded and obscure — the love may grow cold — the hope may languish—doubts may spring up which perplex the mind in its approaches to the mercy-seat, and infirmities of temper, or weakness of the animal spirits, may agitate the mind and disturb its peace. All these cases require serious consideration and special spiritual treatment. The various phases, therefore, of the Christian life—its drawbacks, its difficulties and discouragements—offer a very important subject for our consideration. Its im-

pediments are not always easily discerned — its very existence may at times seem dubious; and so closely are they connected in this world, that there is a constant difficulty in separating between the elements of the natural and the spiritual life of man. How many nice and perplexing questions arise when we come to the practical application of the teaching of Holy Scripture to the cases of different individuals!

At present, therefore, we may be said to be engaged with preliminary considerations belonging to the question. Our first inquiry seems to be, How are we to account for the infatuation of those who have no wish or desire to lead the Christian life at all? How are we to deal with such cases? How are we to awaken men's minds to the importance of the question? How shall we drive them from their indifference? What are the usual impediments in the way of men entering upon the Christian life? What causes chiefly produce that inconsistency of profession and of practice at which the angels marvel? What stumblingblocks keep back so many good and sincere men from the heights of piety which they might attain, and ought to attain? How are we most effectually to rouse the sympathies of those who are absorbed in the cares and pleasures of life? How shall we best correct the mistakes of the well-intentioned but erring Christian disciple? How are we best to cheer onwards the diffident and procrastinating traveller in the Christian course? How, in short, shall we, with most benefit and advantage to those whom we have to address, describe the narrow way that leadeth to

life eternal? How shall we best induce men to persevere when the way is steep and the path is thorny? What mode will best show how it is that, after all is said about difficulties and impediments, these ways are the ways of pleasantness, these paths are paths of peace? All this, we are well aware, must be the work of grace in the heart of every Christian believer. The spiritual life is the work of the Holy Spirit of God, and not the result of human reasoning or of mere human exhortation. In all our speculations on the subject we must look to the agency of God, first, in imparting the wish and desire to lead the life divine; and, second, to His continued aid in sustaining men in their progress. We look for the *origin* of this inner spiritual life in what has been given us in the sacred ordinance of baptism, wherein we were made members of Christ's church—wherein power was given for us to become children of God, and inheritors of His divine promises. We look for the immediate *causes* of men becoming earnest Christians in many incentives to piety, and many inducements to serious thought—in reflections upon the utterances of God's Word—in hearing the exhortations of Christian ministers—in the reading religious books—in the discipline of affliction, sickness, and sorrow—in the warnings of advancing age—in the recollections of a father's instruction, and the fond remembrance of a mother's prayers and a mother's tears. Every one has given to him the seeds and elements of the Christian life, as well as means and opportunities and motives for bringing them to good effect. But at the same time there must be the willing mind in men

themselves; there must be the co-operation of man's own heart and mind with divine agency; there must be the prayer and watchfulness which are needful to keep men steadfast and persevering; there must be a deep sense of what they have to do different from the world.

Now, it has been already observed that we are dealing with first elements, and preliminary matters. On that ground, therefore, there is a question which we would first ask, and which may perhaps a little surprise some of our readers; and that is, to inquire whether they always really understand what is meant when it is said that an inner or hidden principle constitutes the Christian life of every believer. This at least is quite evident — it must be a great drawback to the force and effect of anything we may subsequently have to offer upon the subject if it should *not* be quite clearly understood what is the precise question at issue, and what the nature of that life and condition to which we attach so much consequence; and it will be found that no elements or particulars of the question are more important than the careful consideration of what this hidden Christian life really is—what constitutes the essential difference between the man who leads it and the man who leads it not—by what marks or tokens the life for heaven is to be distinguished from the life for earth. We should say, then, that the divine life will be chiefly known by this: Its principal aim or object is different from the aim and object of the ordinary life of the world. I say *chief* aim, because there *are* aims and purposes common to both. Each desires success and

credit and competency; each has the desire to secure the comfort and happiness of those who are objects of affection; both would avoid pain; both would wish for security and rest. But then there is set before the believer one great aim which in *his* life is paramount—an aim which, we fear, in the worldly life, is little thought of. The believer's constant aim is the salvation of the soul—a fitness and preparation for the happiness and the occupation of eternity. Whatever other questions are before him, this is prominent above all. Whatever other objects he seeks, he seeks *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Now, in further explanation of this part of our subject, we may observe a comparison or analogy in man's earthly course which will illustrate the ruling aim and object of one who pursues in earnest the spiritual or Christian course. Thus, for example, we often observe a man in human life who has one leading prominent feature of character,—it may be the love of money—the love of art —of natural science—of learning—of political influence; whatever it may be, we find the whole character to be coloured or marked by the ruling passion—the prominent aim and object of his life, which he ever keeps in view: it comes out on every occasion; there is no mistaking what he chiefly desires—no doubt on what he is chiefly occupied: it goes through his whole life, it is shown in sickness, infirmity, and decay, and is only lost sight of when the spirit enters the darkness which hangs over the valley of the shadow of death itself. Now for such peculiar indications of an *unearthly*

life: The prominent features which mark it from the common tenor of the world's course do not require that the ordinary pursuits and objects of man's existence should be entirely sunk and lost sight of. To lead the Christian or hidden life does not imply that there is a cessation of the open and manifest life for the world and temporal objects—these the Christian believer has in common with the man of the world. Both have indeed many objects to pursue, many ends to accomplish, which do not bear visibly and immediately upon spiritual questions, and therefore we should be inclined to say that the Christian life is not a life which destroys or supersedes the common life, but is a life taken in to the other—a life which directs and guides the worldly life,—not to supplant it, or render it nugatory, but to hallow all its pursuits, and give a heavenward tendency to everything in which it is engaged. Our blessed Lord has exactly described the inner Christian life under the parable of leaven, which is not a substitute for the meal with which it is mixed, but blends itself with the mass, permeates every particle, and produces an effect which diffuses itself throughout—in short, "leavens the whole lump;" and thus the hidden or Christian life cannot be mistaken, because its influence over the whole man is manifest in the effects which it produces. The godly man, though he is *in* the world, and occupied with the world, is never *of* the world, neither partaking of its spirit nor imbibing its affections. In his intercourse with mankind—in his conduct as a citizen—in making money and spending it—in his demeanour under prosperity or adversity—his

behaviour under the world's hatred and ill-usage, or the world's applause and favour—under disappointment or success—in health or sickness, joy or sorrow—under all circumstances of his earthly lot, there is always something to show the hidden life below the surface. There is always an indication of a code of laws—a rule of conduct—an active agency of motives—of hopes and fears different from those which guide men in common life. When he comes before the public eye, men take note of him that he has "been with Jesus," that he has learned His lessons, and imbibed His Spirit.

The man who is affected by the hidden life of faith in Christ, estimates all mortal objects of desire by a very different standard and a very different rule of judgment from the men of this world. He gives them their just weight and importance so far as time is concerned, but he never forgets that they are things which he must shortly *leave*. They cannot, therefore, produce in his mind the same influences which are produced by the things that are eternal—by the interests that are immortal. And there can be no doubt that, in cases where men have been living solely to the world and to their own indulgences, and then have entered upon this inner spiritual life of the Christian believer, we must speak of such persons as having undergone a great change—as having, indeed, experienced an entire renovation. "If any man *be in Christ*, he is a *new* creature," writes St Paul of this change. He is a new creature, because "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." He represents the nature and importance of that change by

the analogy that subsists between the imperfection and ignorance of the state of childhood, and the moral and religious sentiments attained in the full growth of a matured manhood. "When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things."

Following out the analogy suggested by St Paul, we find that in childhood, whilst the faculties are yet undeveloped, the knowledge circumscribed, the taste for high and noble objects unformed, the desires and affections are necessarily limited to the objects which belong to a condition so imperfect and so elementary. But when the powers of reasoning and of judging become expanded—when great questions rise before the mind—then the childish things are put away, and the man estimates the higher interests with which his increased intelligence has brought him into contact. So in the Christian life, as the power of grace is allowed to expand, and the religious knowledge to purify the religious desires and ennoble the religious hopes, then the Christian believer has become spiritually no longer a child, but in the life of grace and godliness is become a MAN. He is now as different, in a religious sense, from his former spiritual condition, as the man, in an intellectual sense, is different from the child. And St Paul, when speaking of this change as to spiritual apprehension and spiritual desires, declares that those who have undergone it are "in Christ," and have become new creatures. And the apostle applies this language to human beings like ourselves. He speaks of men and women

becoming, on account of religious hopes and desires and conduct, so changed, that they may be called new creatures; or, as the original more forcibly expresses it, as a work done in us—a new *creation.*

What stronger motive could be urged for suggesting, at any rate, a serious self-examination and self-inquiry into our own condition? We can now ponder the description of this "new creation," as given by St Paul, and we may then put the searching and solemn question to ourselves, Is this at all the kind of change that is manifested in our hearts? Are the old things which bound us exclusively to time, and which kept down our souls to the world, really passed away? Are the new things which belong to eternity now rooted in our affections, and do they form an essential part of our relation to our God and to our future destiny?

CHAPTER II.

VAST IMPORTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, AND SOME REASONS FOR MEN'S MISTAKES REGARDING IT.

WE have now considered some of those passages in holy writ, which clearly and without disguise refer to a Christian course or spiritual life, such as every sincere believer is supposed to cherish and pursue for heavenly purposes; a life, quite separable from the ordinary natural and worldly life which belongs to every son and daughter of Adam in reference to things present and temporal. That difference we endeavoured to explain, in showing how the aim, objects, and mode of judging which belong to the two lives are different. And when thus explained, there can be no doubt as to the *importance* of the question, Whether *we* have assumed this spiritual life, and whether *we* are following out its high and holy purposes? Indeed, such a question is, in fact, synonymous with asking whether or not we are, in scriptural language, "following Christ," and, like Him, "taking up our cross;" whether we are pursuing the path trod by apostles—by saints

and martyrs—by good and holy men now made perfect in bliss; or whether we are satisfied to make the religious life a mere matter of form and *external* observance, resolving to pursue the ordinary life of this world as if we really looked not beyond its objects, its interests, and rewards. The present and worldly life MUST be pursued: it is man's appointed path from the cradle to the grave, and it has its calls to duty, its business, and its legitimate attractions forced upon us. But the Christian life of which we are now treating is a matter of our own deliberate choice. It is not open and manifest to the world. It is in holy Scripture called a "hidden life," because *unseen* by the world —because spiritual in its aim and objects. The worldly man, so long as he *continues* worldly, does not discern its character or mark its progress. It is often seen of God only, and of those who pursue its course; whilst, no doubt, it is marked by angels: for our Lord distinctly declares that for a worldly and a sinful man to have fairly entered upon that inner spiritual and divine life, causes joyful congratulations in seraphic minds before the throne of God. And yet, with all this, we are fully justified in saying that there are many in the world who scarcely comprehend the meaning of its terms: who have never set themselves to pursue this inner hidden life, and who would be inclined to consider those who strongly urge its importance and enforce its obligation as mystics or enthusiasts—as unfitted for the common business of life, and as fit only for the retirement of the cloister. Now here we must pause to remind our readers that this is

no question of particular forms of polity and services in the Church; it is not a question of nice distinction regarding relative moral duties, or abstract doctrines: but it is a question whether men have chosen the better part in life; whether they have resolved to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and are preparing for His second coming; whether their professions of religion are formal or real—whether mere words, or firm determination of purpose. It forms a powerful appeal: it is an irresistible call, at least, for self-examination and self-knowledge. It is a great problem to be solved; it is a fearful question to be answered, Why is it that men are not more in earnest upon religious questions? why are not men more concerned on the subject of their eternal salvation? why are motives so powerful often urged in vain? how is it that promises so magnificent can be proclaimed with so little effect? How can threatenings so awful be heard without dismay? We can never sufficiently express our wonder at the amazing apathy with which the Christian life, and all that pertains to it, is looked upon by thousands whose welfare is involved in it, and whose best interests for the countless ages of eternity *seem* to form a subject for consideration which it would be *impossible* to pass by with indifference. We might urge the vast importance of the question from many considerations; but let us weigh the matter in connection with these three—the witness of Jesus Christ, the desire of angels, and the convictions of God's own ministers. Let us, *first*, Consider how it has been dealt with by Him who cannot err; *second*, Let us consider how it is viewed by the

bright intelligences who are nearer to the throne of God than we are; and, *third*, Let us note how it is contemplated by zealous and good men, who have well examined it, and pondered its importance. *First*, It seems extraordinary that the words and the representations of our blessed Lord should not bring home at once to men's hearts, to their understandings, to their hopes and fears, the inestimable value of their immortal souls, the vast importance of eternal salvation. Thus our Lord, when He announces the duty of those who are to be His sincere followers and true disciples, states, in language which should sink deep into every heart, the immense, the inconceivable importance of the issue. He asks these questions, for the answer to which let every one be prepared: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in *exchange* for his soul?" *Second*, Then again, think what a powerful, what a touching testimony to the importance of men walking with God, we have in the feelings and sympathies of angels. Consider the lofty, the pure, the clear-sighted view *they* take of the great scheme of human salvation—with what anxious and benevolent solicitude *they* regard the conduct of their human brethren in regard to that scheme of mercy. Christ took not on Him the nature of angels; we cannot, therefore, say how far they look upon the Christian scheme of salvation as connected with their own spiritual safety, because that is already secure; but they are pure and holy, and they feel so

deeply the worth and the importance of the scheme devised for *man's* redemption, that with awe and holy wonder they desire to look into its mysteries; when man—man, the very being for whom those mysteries have been promulgated—is satisfied to let them pass by unnoticed. *Third,* Once more, we have a testimony which, though a human one, is still very powerful and impressive. Consider what are the feelings of those who, though far inferior in knowledge and in purity to angels, are yet so deeply imbued with the divine love and mercy that the careless believer cannot help feeling that *their* earnestness for his acceptance of the gracious offer should have its due weight and importance in the decision. Only think how good men, who have walked themselves with God, and have learnt to value God's love and mercy, are distressed with the ingratitude and folly of their brethren of mankind who have never sought to know God, and to share the benefit of salvation through Christ. David declared, regarding the careless and indifferent of his day, "Rivers of water run down mine eyes because men keep not thy law." So also Jeremiah: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain (*i.e.*, lost) of the daughter of my people." So also St Paul: "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears" (*i.e.*, wrote of their religious indifference).

For the insensibility and unreasonableness of mankind in regard to the importance of the Christian life, we may

refer, therefore, to the hopes and expectations of God's ministers regarding the impression which, *before* they have experience, *they* expect must be made upon the minds of their hearers. We feel assured that many a minister and many a missionary must have gone forth to his work with the love of God in redemption glowing at his heart, encouraging him in his labours of mercy for recovery of the lost—animating his exertions in awakening the insensible, rousing the slumbering, stimulating the careless. We can conceive such a one, in the ardour of his zeal, supposing himself to be *invincible* over the great enemies of man's good, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil—his hand strengthened for the fight—his armour of persuasion and exhortation buckled on—his tongue eloquent and convincing in the cause of his blessed Master and His holy truth. Yes! we can imagine such a one gone forth to labour for men's souls. We can suppose him persuaded that he *must* be irresistible with his hearers to turn them from the paths of wickedness and vice, and lead them onwards in the Christian spiritual life, and steadily pursue the difficult path that leads to glory. He goes forth ready to meet every objection, to answer every argument. He will silence every doubt, and chase away desponding thought. His ground is so strong in Scripture and in reason, that he anticipates going with his flock to Zion to join themselves to the Lord, and together wear the immortal crown. Such a one would hold the office of the faithful minister to be the greatest honour he could attain on earth, were he only such as the poet's lovely por-

trait represents the man of God—the simple-minded pastor, humble, unassuming, and devoted—

> "But in his duty prompt at every call,
> He watched, and wept, and prayed, and felt for all;
> And as a bird each fond endearment tries
> To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
> He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
> Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

We need not follow up the results. The story is become a trite one, of the young reformer, who, supposing that from the strength of his cause he would be successful against all the enemies of man's faith, and carry with him the emotions of every heart, soon came to the sad experience that "the old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon." Do what we will, many continue indifferent and impracticable. The difficulty of gaining their attention even to such topics as the wisdom, the happiness, and the blessedness of choosing the better part, of living the spiritual life with Christ, shows that with many the subject is become irksome and distasteful.

When we think on these things, and observe the indifference of mankind to such momentous considerations, we can well suppose the Christian ministry taking up the complaint of the evangelical prophet, and pouring out the sorrowful accents of Isaiah to describe how deeply they feel the Redeemer's despised and rejected position with those to whom He is preached: "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

When we come to inquire more closely into the *cause*

for such strange anomalies in our experience of mankind —when we ask how it is that there is so much profession of religion, and so little of the reality—so much external form, with so little of internal power?—it were easy to say that it proceeds from the corruption of man's nature, the worldliness of his views, and his general indifference to spiritual concerns—that the Holy Spirit has been so long resisted and quenched, that men go on without serious thought, and, in fact, never show forth the real character of the life of God in the soul.

But we must descend to a closer examination of the causes that prevent men from *entering* upon the spiritual life, and the various hindrances to their *approaches* towards the mercy-seat. We may name several causes; as the following:—

1. We are unwilling to assign to absolute unbelief or infidelity a direct office in promoting this apathy or insensibility to the spiritual life. We trust the day is not yet arrived in England when any number of nominal Christians are deterred from following Christ because they do not believe in His divine character and mission, or because they do not receive the Bible as the inspired word of God. We would fondly hope our countrymen are yet uncorrupted by the untruthful and presumptuous speculations of our time, whether written in English or translated from the German, and which, we regret to think, are now published and circulated with untiring zeal amongst us. But there are many, it is to be feared, who, without imbibing such absolutely infidel principles, do often lose the clear and distinct impression of Chris-

tian truth which is essential to a consistent and persevering Christian life. There are with many persons a modified infidelity, or rather, perhaps, we should say, that on some particular points of doctrine their belief is superficial. It does not penetrate deep enough to produce the full effects. For example, they are not thoroughly convinced of the great truth of man's corrupt and fallen state by nature—the consequent necessity of its restoration under grace. The spiritual or inner life, therefore, of which we speak, does not present itself to their minds as an essential consequence and portion of the restorative process proposed by the Gospel of our Lord.

2. On another point there may be an exhibition of this modified infidelity injurious to the progress of the religious life. They do not firmly believe what the religious life can do for them—they do not believe its power for producing happiness and peace of mind. They believe the promises of the world—they will not believe the promises of the Gospel of Christ. If we could only get men to discern things with the eye of faith, and to see them as they really are, we should have better hope of many, for whom we can now only sorrow, and pray for their better mind. Men are for ever deceived by appearances. The god of this world has literally blinded their eyes, to make them discern many things either so indistinctly or so falsely, that, practically, and as far as their conduct in life is concerned, they are constantly arriving at false conclusions. They are in error as to the importance and value of many worldly objects of

desire—they are mistaken as to the real character of pure practical religion. This ignorance men are called upon to dispel by serious and impartial inquiry; this want of confidence in God's word and promises they are called upon to resist by prayer and serious examination. And, above all, they are urged to give the question a fair trial, by bringing it to a practical and experimental issue. "If any man," saith our Lord, "will *do* His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." When Nathaniel declared he did not believe any good thing could come out of Nazareth, all that the judicious Philip asked of him was, "Come and see."

3. The cause, however, which, it is to be feared, most commonly keeps men from pursuing the Christian life, is not a theoretical but a practical cause. The truth is, men are unwilling to part with those sins and indulgences which do most easily beset them, the retaining of which, however, is inconsistent with the due pursuit of an inner spiritual life. These must, in fact, be abandoned—cut off, it may be, like the right hand—plucked out like the right eye. Without such sacrifice it is impossible to take up the cross and follow Christ, who Himself in greatest humility bore *His* cross, and bore it to a terrible death of shame and suffering. Hence the exhortations He addresses to all His disciples, to show them in what strong terms He demands a sacrifice of all that interferes with man's duty to his God. What is valued as a right hand is to be cut off, what is dear as a right eye must be cast away, whenever they cannot be retained consistently with the service of Christ and

the salvation of men's souls. It is greatly to be feared that such required sacrifice of ease and self-indulgence is the condition at which so many demur on an invitation to follow out the religious life. They have no doubts as to the arguments by which the importance and the reasonableness of such a life are maintained. But men hesitate when they have to give up what selfish gratification and what long habit have rendered essential to them. Thus it is that men are held back from the narrow way that leadeth to eternal life, because they hesitate about abandoning the broad way, wherein they have long found their ease and self-indulgence. They may be quite alive to the representations which have been made in favour of the narrow way—may be quite sensible of its superior holiness, peace, and happiness; they may have deep and sincere respect and admiration for those who diligently and faithfully pursue it; but they will not themselves make the sacrifice for it which is required. No doubt they too would walk in the narrow way that leadeth to life, could it only be made consistent with that easier path which they have determined they will *not* forego. But, alas! herein they only deceive themselves. There are in the one path those habits and indulgences which cannot be made to harmonise with what is required of them in the other, and therefore to many professing Christian believers might at last be addressed the words of the prophet to the feeble and wavering children of Israel, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" On this ground it is, we may say, that many persons find themselves, so to

speak, in a false position. Pursuing a path which in many respects they know to be wrong, their better judgment tells them of a way more holy and more satisfactory; they resolve upon following it at some convenient time. But the time is postponed, the world resumes its influence, and claims their exclusive regard. In the mean time the inner or spiritual life is untrodden; it is like the path which "no fowl knoweth, and which the eye of the vulture hath not seen."

4. There is another reason which may be assigned for men not entering more resolutely upon the Christian life, and for that spirit of indifference too often manifest in working out the principle of the life of God within the soul; and that is, the want of a personal and practical *application* of the great truths of the Gospel of Christ. To understand this assertion, we must consider well the difference between knowledge and consideration—between belief as an act of the mind, and belief as a motive to conduct. Religion, as a great question affecting the temporal and eternal condition of mankind, may be considered in the double nature of a science which men have to learn, or as a rule which men have to follow; in one word, as a theory, or as an obligation. The two points are more easily separable than many persons are aware of. But an observation of facts, as derived from the history of mankind, will furnish abundant proof that such separation has been often made between theory and practice in sacred things. This case, for example, may be adduced: A man who, in the exercise of his calm unbiassed judgment, is ready to expatiate on some

question of morals, to depict the beauty of virtue, and point out the harmony of virtuous affections—a man who has well described the loveliness of truth, purity, gentleness, generosity, and all the finer emotions of our nature, shall yet, when followed out of his study, and observed in the actual intercourse of life, be found hard, selfish, immoral, passionate, and worldly-minded. Take another case: A man may possess a clear knowledge of law as a science—may thoroughly understand its great principles, and their specific application to all cases of human conduct; who may discuss in a lofty strain of thought and language the paramount obligations of the eternal rules of equity and justice; and yet that man may never have brought those great principles home to his actual conduct, so as to prevent his being in his own person dishonest, grasping, and illiberal. What a remarkable example of this inconsistency between knowledge and its application—between the most elevated appreciation of great principles, and the lowest degree of power to resist personal temptation—we have in one of the most distinguished names recorded in the annals of mankind! Lord Bacon, who penetrated with an angel's power of intellect into the great questions of man's rights and moral obligations, disgraced that name by the application of torture to criminals, and by taking bribes as a judge. Hence the description of him by the poet as

"The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind;"

and hence that glowing portrait of his character in the memorable words of the late Lord Macaulay: "It is

painful to turn back from contemplating Bacon's philosophy to contemplate his life. He well *knew* the better course, and at one time had resolved to pursue it. Had he done so, we should not thus be forced to own that he who first treated legislation as a science was among the last Englishmen who used the rack—that he who first summoned philosophers to the great work of interpreting nature, was among the last Englishmen who sold justice; and we should conclude our survey of a life placidly, honourably, beneficently passed 'in industrious observations, grounded conclusions, and profitable inventions and discoveries,' with feelings very different from those with which we now turn away from the checkered spectacle of so much glory and so much science."

Such a case as this applies to our present subject, because it proves so clearly a remarkable anomaly in human nature. It establishes the great fact, that men may know and believe the great truths of religion without at all practically entering upon the spiritual and religious life which the Gospel requires. Besides knowledge of religious truths, besides research into their nature, and besides zeal for their propagation and advancement in their purity and fulness, there is required of ourselves their personal application, and their adoption as a practical rule and guide for our own conduct.

We may rest assured these are two very different processes in men's minds—very different manifestations of men's conduct and demeanour. St Paul supposes it quite a *possible* case for persons to speak with the tongues of men and of angels—to have the gift of prophecy,

and to be able to understand all mysteries and all knowledge—and yet to be without Christianity; *i. e.*, without the practical development of that love to God and man which constitutes Christian charity. Experience has abundantly shown that men may have much knowledge of Scripture and of Scripture truths; that men may have great zeal, and make a loud profession of orthodoxy in the cause of truth, and yet may not yet have entered upon that humble spiritual life, that closer walk with God, which are required for their own *personal advancement* to a Father's home.

In subduing, therefore, or endeavouring to subdue, the indifference towards the inner or spiritual life of practical piety, we are not required to investigate abstruse questions in speculative theology; we do not need more knowledge, more learning, more zeal in what belongs to the externals of the Christian religion. We have to ponder well our personal relations to God and to His revealed truth. We are called on to make an earnest consideration of all that belongs to the soul's eternal wellbeing. We must estimate fairly and truly our need of a Saviour. We are to weigh well what must be the consequence of indecision in the great work of salvation. We have to apply to our own case all the promises and threatenings of the Gospel, as they must appear to an awakened intelligence of them in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment.

There can be no question that the prevalent defect, the great error of men's religious position, is the want of this practical and personal APPLICATION of sacred truth

to their own special use and improvement. Men can enter into the general question of salvation by Christ, and consider its bearing upon mankind at large, but without seriously and earnestly pressing the question —"What shall *I* do to be saved?" They can appreciate the greatness and solemnity of the circumstances connected with future judgment; they can form pictures in their own mind of the terrible nature of the event described by our Lord of His coming in glory as Son of Man to judge the world; they can follow or suggest descriptions of the awful circumstances — the great white throne — the assemblage of the whole race of mankind — the trumpet-call — the angel's swearing that time shall be no more—the passing-away of the present earth and heaven — the joyful invitation of acceptance to the righteous—the awful consignment of the wicked to eternal punishment. All this may have been well considered and powerfully described by one who has never for *himself* seriously and practically for one moment brought home to his own heart and experience the great question, "What is my fitness or unfitness for the investigation of the last day?" We want—what is expressed in the word "CONVERSION"—we want that turning of the mind to God and to His Word which implies a real and sincere interest in those things which belong to our eternal peace. We want that acceptance and that study of Christ's Gospel which are prompted by a desire to know what we ought to *do*. It is one thing to be a theologian, and another thing to be a Christian. It is one thing to

be religious, and it is another to be pious. It is one thing to be zealous for our faith, and it is another to be truly converted.

And of such conversion we have in Holy Scripture a perfect example—a real type and true model—in the conversion of St Paul. There can be no doubt as to the nature of the change which came over *his* mind after the miraculous appearance to him of the Lord Jesus. From that hour he was a converted man. Not merely because he had become a believer in the Galilean whose name he had blasphemed, and whose faith and followers he had persecuted, but because his life was changed—his hopes set on different objects—his judgment of the world estimated by a different standard—his access to God was now established by a "new and living way," and what once was gain to him, he now reckoned but as loss for Christ. He now was willing to forget all the things that were behind—things which he had once valued, and admired, and desired. He desired to press forward to things unseen, that lay before him. He resigned the honours, the distinction of his former position, and was content to become as the offscouring of all things if it were but to win Christ. His conversation was henceforth in heaven, and with heavenly things. It was not merely that he had seen a vision in his journey to persecute the Christian disciples, and had received a miraculous commission from above, but, as he declared to Agrippa in narrating the circumstances, he had not been *disobedient* to that heavenly

call. His language was not, Lord, what wouldest Thou have me to *believe?* or, What wouldest Thou have me to *know?* but his question was, Lord, what wouldest Thou have me to *do?* And this is the great example, the great lesson for all. Let no one be disobedient to his own heavenly call. Let no one shut his eyes to a light as bright as that which shone around the apostle and his company on their way to Damascus—we mean the pleading of God's Spirit speaking to us through the convictions of our own conscience. Of this we may rest assured, many pass through life with no imputation of their being irreligious, with no suspicion of their want of faith, or their defect of knowledge in the great principles of Christian truth, but who have never yet seriously and earnestly entered upon the inner or spiritual Christian life, which it is the object of these pages to explain and enforce. Every one is called upon to remember how vitally he ought to deal with the great truths and doctrines of Christianity. They are in Scripture not merely considered in a speculative or general sense, as exercising the reason and the intellect; but they are set forth as bearing upon all our hopes and expectations—our desires and purposes for time and for eternity—for the daily, hourly feeling and business of life.

Every one should exert upon the religion which he professes distinct, practical, and vigorous acts of faith, thereby to mingle and incorporate it with all the powers of mind and all the springs of action. Let any one determine to lead this life, and he will find a new era

of moral existence has risen up in his experience. The Christian believer will find that the resolute commencement of the inner or spiritual life has been a certain expedient for weakening the power of corruption in the heart — that it has supplied an effective weapon for resisting the bad influence and seductions of the world —and that, since he formed his resolution, he has, under the assistance of God's grace, been daily rising progressively into the image of God and the Redeemer.

CHAPTER III.

DIFFICULTY OF SUSTAINING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHEN ONCE BEGUN.

We are now prepared to take a somewhat higher position in our views of the Christian life. We pass from elementary considerations connected with its origin to questions which belong to its *progress*. The obstacles are surmounted—indifference has been driven from the heart by a manifestation of the truth — attention has really been roused to the importance of a life beyond the wants and calls and interests of the day. The question on which we have in these two last chapters been engaged, we are now to conclude, will assume some of the importance which belongs to it. But now we go farther than this. We take now the case where men have begun in earnest to consider their entrance upon the spiritual course of life. A resolution has been formed to put the question fairly and sincerely—"What *shall* I do to be saved?" The persons of whom we now speak have turned their faces towards Zion. To them the day has come, in which the cry of the watchman has been heard

upon the Mount Ephraim, which said, "Arise ye, let us go up to Zion, unto the Lord our God." What should we consider now? Perhaps it will be said, the work has been fairly begun. We have only now to congratulate those who are in this condition, and bid them "God speed" on the way which they have chosen—on the journey which they have resolved upon taking to another and a better country. Alas! unfortunately much has *yet* to be done, both by warning and by exhortation. Unfortunately the same question which St Paul once put to the Galatian converts is too frequently applicable to many professed followers of Christ of our own day—"Ye *did* run well—who did *hinder* you?" And amongst ourselves, an earnest and affectionate expostulation might be made with the undecided and the hesitating—"Ye once were inclined to run well the course of a Christian life and Christian godliness; ye began fairly and truly—what hindered your progress? How is it that you have not advanced to greater *perfection?*" What causes have contributed towards the disappointment which must always arise in well-regulated and well-constituted minds from seeing a good work begun, and then making no progress—from witnessing a falling-off or a hesitation where every motive should have led to perseverance and to progress. Now in every case to which this query is really applicable, we would earnestly endeavour to supply some of the *reasons* which are probable for the failure we lament. We do not now speak so much to the case of what is termed in Scripture a backsliding or apostasy, nor do we refer to the case of an entire

abandonment of the cause of Christ and of His truth, or of an absolute return to the bondage of sin and the service of the world; but the case is that of persons commencing the Christian life, and not advancing—the case of a course begun, but not of progress made—and little fruits, therefore, of a pious and a spiritual life as yet brought to perfection. Many causes may be assigned for this state of things.

We may state generally, that the principal and most obviously assignable reason for such defects, and for such inconsistency between promise and performance, is the want of energy or earnestness in *prosecution* of the objects already admitted to be all-important. How often do we see this practically illustrated in the case even of those who seem to entertain a strong conviction of the great value of the religious life itself, and who have a deep sense of the unspeakable interest that belongs to the great question of religion generally! The position of the Christian believer, which we now contemplate, is that which we may see daily in the world. It is the position of one who may fairly be said to recognise the difference between the external or material life of man on earth, and that inner or spiritual life which has reference to the concerns of the immortal soul and the invisible things of God, and who yet has placed before him so inadequate a standard of spiritual attainment—has formed so imperfect a conception of the power of grace over the world—that there is no life or animation connected with his religious opinions. Such an one has evidently placed adoption of the religious

life on low motives, and proposed a low aim to be attained in its prosecution. He feels so far the importance of religion, as to be convinced that a man *without* religion is in a false position—false, both as concerns his own safety, and as concerns the real nature of the objects with which religion itself is concerned. He is not indifferent. He considers that he *has* obeyed a call to follow Christ. But having done what he considers essential to his own consistency of conduct, he is satisfied to remain without further exertion. There is an appearance to be preserved. There is a regard to be paid to his character and position in life—to his fears and anxieties for the future. Having gained these, he is satisfied. He has not set before him a high and difficult aim — a great and glorious object. He does not aspire to the nearest approach to a perfect walk with God, and therefore any unusual energy seems unnecessary. He has a very humble and quiet path to pursue—the path of a decent compliance with custom and appearance—and therefore no earnestness seems necessary to its prosecution. Such a one, therefore, may have *begun* the inner or spiritual life, but he is not likely to make much progress in it. Having formed his religious sentiments and purposes merely on such motives as the desire to attain a fair character in the world, and to escape the danger and discredit of a life actually irreligious, or indifferent about all religious observations, he does not seem to have any stimulus for that nobler ambition which would desire to *advance* in godliness; nor does he seek to rise to a

piety which, in his eyes, really appears to be needless, and not, therefore, necessarily required of him. He has chosen his side. He is no enemy to the faith of Jesus. He has declared himself its friend, and he hopes for a friend's lot in his Lord's favour.

This is the description of a general apathy as to an advance in Christian godliness. But we must consider some of those *special* reasons by which men are misled or stayed in their heavenward advance. And of such particular reasons for the failure of those who do not *advance* in the Christian life, we must always reckon a defective cultivation of the spirit of devotion. This must of necessity be an *essential* defect, because prayer is evidently intended by the great and good Father of the human race as the means or instrument for sustaining, carrying forward, and perfecting the inner and religious life. In fact, the devotion of the heart is the immediate channel of communicating between humanity itself and the seat of that eternal and gracious Spirit by whom the whole world is governed, and *without* whose agency nothing on earth is holy or pure, or elevated above the littleness of time. The sacred poet of the *Night Thoughts* has thus beautifully expressed the solemn truth:—

> "Prayer ardent opens heaven, lets down a stream
> Of glory on the consecrated hour
> Of man in *audience* with the Deity."

If, therefore, there shall ever be a cessation of prayer, or should prayer become a mere formal offering of the devotional exercises of the *lips*, the spiritual life must

languish and decay. It is deprived of that by which alone it can flourish and grow up unto perfection. Prayer has been termed one of the wings of the soul in its upward flight to the footstool of the eternal throne. Take away the spirit of prayer from the heart of the Christian believer, and you take away that which supports and sustains the life of God in the soul of men. This will be further evident if we consider for a moment what is the chief element of existence in the lives of those blessed Christians who are now in glory, and who have attained that condition of purity and bliss to which all who are now struggling on earth with corruption and with trial are looking forward. How is the *perfection* of THAT spiritual life kept in action? From the account given by St John of what he saw in the revelation made to him of things to come, whilst he abode in the Isle of Patmos, it is quite evident that with the angels and seraphs, and the whole company of spirits made perfect before the throne of God, the natural expression of their grateful and blessed sensations is the utterance of their praise and the outpouring of their adoration. Of them we may truly say without exaggeration—

"Prayer all their business, all their pleasure praise."

If, then, the occupation most congenial to saints in glory consists in the utterance of devotional raptures before the throne of God and of the Lamb, and of the seven Spirits of God, no one can live the life of piety and spiritual progress *here* to whom that occupation is irksome—to whom it is not the natural resource under

present feelings and earnest heavenward desires. It would then be poured forth in the earnest utterance of the psalmist,—"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" To such an one the divine nature is like a *magnet*, drawing up towards it all the heavenward aspirations of the soul. The soul may not always, and in set terms and formal language, be addressing itself to God; but there is always such a union or fellowship of the human with the eternal Spirit that it may, as it were, be said to be always *going forth* towards God—going forth in short mental ejaculations, or in terms even still more solemn and devout, in those moments of silence and serious meditation by which, like the noiseless tread of angels, there is a holy intercourse with the souls of men on earth with the glorious realities of the sanctuary above. We must observe, however, that when we say that "*the spirit of devotion*" is essential to carry on and perfect the Christian life, we do not mean the mere formal offering of prayer as petitions for blessings which are desired, or as praying for exemption from evils which are dreaded; but it is the earnest desire for a "closer walk" with God, and for connection of *our* spirits with His Spirit. It is the sincere and heartfelt wish to join in that universal voice of adoring love and praise, of which the sounds in heaven above should be re-echoed from the earth below. It is the constant utterance of a full heart ever going forth in those sublime and pregnant words

of our own communion service, "Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious Name; evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most High."

Now the state of mind of which we speak as being essential to the growth and progress of the inner life, has direct regard to the cultivation of *devotional* feelings, and to petitions for *spiritual* as well as temporal blessings. The object of prayer is not limited to what is needed for the wants of the ordinary and external life, but extends also to the wants of the inner and the unseen life; and hence the prayer provided for our daily use by Christ Himself contains petitions which have direct reference to the spiritual life, and to the spiritual life alone, just as there are petitions for the ordinary and temporal life of man; and if we do not as earnestly pray that the name of God may be hallowed in all we do, that His kingdom and its rule and government come into our hearts, and that we desire to have no will of our own, but that *His* may be done, and acknowledged to be what we desire,—if we do not offer up such prayers as these with as much sincerity as we pray for daily bread, and all the comforts of this world, and pardon of our sins, we do not see how it is to be expected that we shall grow in grace, and make advances in the spiritual life. When, however, we speak of devotional exercises as essential to the growth and progress of the Christian life, we mean to include, besides prayers, the use of all the sacred

ordinances of our holy faith. The faithful and devout participation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is one of those means of grace by which spiritual food and sustenance are supplied to the soul, just as food and sustenance are supplied to the body by ordinary means of human nourishment; and the inner life must have *its own* supply. The fountain can only be filled so long as the spring pours forth its waters to supply it. The spiritual life must seek its nourishment and support from above, or, like all mere earthly denizens, it will droop and die. One cause, therefore, of the want of progress in the Christian life we believe to spring from a want of this devotional spirit in the use of prayers, and sacraments, and holy observances, which earnestly *desires* those graces by which, and by which alone, that life can be sustained and advanced. But there is *another* reason which may frequently account for the want of that progress which the believer ought to be making in the Christian life; and that is, an insufficient earnestness in the study of Holy Scripture. What is Scripture, and what is implied in the study of Scripture? Scripture is the Word of God. It is the appointed mode and channel by which *He* speaks to us, and therefore to study Scripture is to listen to God's own word—to seek that we may know His will—to listen that we may hear, and know, and understand His voice. We are misled on this point by expressions used in ordinary language. We speak of *reading* the Bible—of *hearing* the Bible, and we do not then get beyond the notion of an ordinary and literal understanding of the

book. But how often it happens that in such treatment of it we do *no more* than hear or read—*i.e.*, do not enter into its spirit—nor do we sufficiently mark its application to our own necessities and our own guidance. We do not so dwell upon its various announcements as to become familiar with its revelations, its denunciations, promises, encouragements, and warnings. We ought to dwell upon them in such a manner as to make it impossible that we should ever elude or forget them. Holy Scripture is an exact type or emblem — a picture or representation of human life, and of human life under the commandments of God's law, and the manifestations of God's will. There is wickedness portrayed in the Bible, because there is wickedness in man; and there is weakness, and inconsistency, and oppression, and folly, and impurity, and ungodliness described in the Bible, all for the same reason. But in the Bible we never for a moment lose sight of the relation in which human beings stand to the God of holiness and of purity. We never can forget that there is a God that is ever observant of men's conduct. It is only in the Bible that we can follow the steps of perfect human nature—only there that our hearts can become thoroughly imbued with what man *can* be when tempted like as we, and yet without sin. In the pages of the Prophets—in the teaching of the Gospels and the Epistles of Christ's apostles, the Bible student can never forget the high and pure motives of conduct which the religion of Christ infuses and encourages. He will always discern truth in contrast with the teaching of mere human expe-

diency, sophistry, or corrupt compliance with what is base and unworthy for the sake of gaining any particular object. He will there find men of God, and followers of Jesus, not absolutely *perfect* as HE was, but always making their thoughts, words, and actions to bear upon that great and holy aim, the glory of God in close union with the salvation of men's souls.

With all men professing to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, men conclude that their life is divided into its two parts—their ordinary life, in which they are openly and manifestly engaged; and their religious life, which has a secret portion in every day, and one day in the week wherein, it is to be supposed, they devote themselves to the service of God. But in the case of St Paul, and other apostles and actors in the Christian church, we hardly recognise the distinction at all. Compared with ordinary men, they seem to live for God and for future things *alone*. Life seems to be an inspiration. All words and actions are accompanied with demonstrations of the Spirit and with power. They feel, and they communicate the feeling to others, that their conversation is in heaven, and only so far on earth at all as is needful for the good of others.

In the pages of the Bible we not only are constantly impressed with what we must do to please God and observe His laws, but we are constantly taught what *we are*. We see our own character as in a glass. We cannot avoid knowing what are our faults and shortcomings. After close study and intimate converse with the Word of God, the Scripture student might say with the woman

of Samaria as she said of Jesus, "Come, see a *book* that told me all things that ever I did." We see a proof of this spiritual growth and strength arising from a close acquaintance and daily familiarity with Holy Scripture in the case of persons who make the Bible their almost only study. It is astonishing the breadth and power it gives the whole character. Such study elevates the notions of the most homely, and imparts originality and freshness to ends the most commonplace. Such accurate acquaintance as we speak of with Holy Scripture seems to supply the want of learning, or certainly to impart a something which no other book could give. St Paul speaks of Apollos being "powerful in the Scriptures;" and so we find John Wesley saying of one very decided in piety, and earnest in his pursuit of the Christian life, that he was a man of one book (*homo unius libri*). The effect was seen in the older Scottish peasantry; and indeed in all cases we shall find that meditation on the pages of Holy Scripture—long and earnest meditation in silence and alone, are needful to sustaining and advancing the spiritual life within our own breasts. The worldly life has its literature, its books by which that life is directed, excited, and charmed. So also the inner Christian life has its books—of those, many are precious and undying records of saints passed into glory; but never, never let the Christian who desires to advance the Christian life forget THE BOOK itself—the book of books; the book by which all others are to be regulated, understood, and warmed into spiritual life and vigour. But do not let us be mistaken

—do not let us be deceived; it is not the cursory, the formal, or the sentimental student of God's Word who thus will take it as the means of advancing his spiritual and Christian life, but it is he who may be said to *live* upon its promises, to converse freely with its characters—to sit daily at the feet of its teachers, the great and specially *divine* Teacher, and those who walked in His steps, and spake inspired by His wisdom. It is he who searches the Scriptures by day, and meditates upon their counsel by night. He goes from the world to the pages of Scripture, and then returns to the world impressed with the lessons and the cautions and the encouragement he has received, and resolves to act as he believes those Scriptures would approve and commend. It is he who searches the field of Scripture as for hid treasure, and then goes and sells all he has—gives up all that reason and religion require—in order that he may confidently and boldly assert before the world, "The God of Holy Scripture is MY God—*He* shall be my portion and my inheritance for ever."

From all this we may rest assured, therefore, that the Christian life requires external aids and stimulants, without which it cannot advance onwards to increasing attainments of piety and virtue. It requires high motives to action, a devotional use of prayers and sacred ordinances; a constant and diligent study of Holy Scripture; a daily familiarity with its spirit and its teaching. But besides these positive aids to piety, we must be well aware that there are not unfrequently obstacles which require to be *removed*. Impediments

stand in the way of progress in the spiritual life, and we cannot look for advance so long as *their* influence remains uncorrected and without some principle of counteraction. What we now refer to are cases wherein many things may be favourable to the growth of the spiritual life—where there may be a determination to advance, and even where progress *seems* to be going on, but where there is also some external circumstance to *retard* that progress—some modes of life, habits, and indulgences; some associations with evil persons, evil practices and dangerous opinions, which must be broken off, or that Christian life will languish and decay. Until these are modified or removed we cannot look for that rising of the soul to the higher walks of Christian piety, and to that pure converse with God and heavenly things which ought to be found in those who have commenced in earnest the life of God in the soul of man. It is to this subject that the apostle evidently refers when he calls upon his disciples (in his Epistle to the Hebrew converts) to lay aside every weight—*i. e.*, every impediment—and the sin that does so easily—*i. e.*, from constitutional bias does most readily and naturally—beset them in their pursuing the religious life; and he calls upon them to lay aside this weight, in order that they may run with patience and without restraint the spiritual race that is set before them. And to a like effect, in the same Epistle, he warns the believer to beware of any "root of bitterness springing up," which may impede the Christian course,—to prevent any plant of evil insidiously taking its place within the heart, and injur-

ing the growth of that good seed which is to grow up and bear the fruits of piety to life eternal.

Of this we may rest assured, the believer will require all his care and diligence in running this Christian race set before him. It is not the piety to which the mind of man *aspires* that constitutes the believer's Christian life, but the piety which he *retains* and improves. Nothing is too high for the believer's *aim* in theory, nothing too low for his weakness in action. Hence our great moral poet—

> "'Tis a thing impossible to frame
> Conception equal to the soul's desires,
> And the most difficult of tasks to *keep*
> Heights which the soul is competent to gain."

The inner life will never even "*keep*" the advantages it has gained under the processes of nature. Men require for its advancement both cultivation by grace and the removal of the thorns and briers which the evil one is too ready to scatter in the hearts of the unwary and the indolent. If we are not making progress in piety, we may be assured there is imminent danger of *retrograding*. We cannot stand still in the Christian life, because constantly exposed to the influence of internal corruption and of temptation from without, which will always be ready to keep back the spirit in its upward ascent. When the strong Sampson ceased to command his enemies, he became their slave; and if *we* do not overcome the opponents of our salvation, they will soon bind us, and lead us captive at their will: the truth is, where men do not actually *advance* in godliness from year to year,

the whole system of their religious condition must be deficient. They cannot be increasing in *knowledge* of God, otherwise they would desire a nearer approach to the perfections of His nature in closer communion with Him: they do not grow in *love* to Jesus, or they would seek to follow him more closely, and serve him with a more devoted service: they cannot have fully learnt their own shortcomings and their corruption, or they would be earnest to walk more *humbly* with their God. Wherever there is growing knowledge of God and of the Saviour's love, and of man's deficiencies, there should at least be the *endeavour* to grow in grace, and to advance in piety from day to day. Who that has contemplated the ascending path of piety and true holiness, would be satisfied to pause at any intermediate step, and to say that now he had attained all that could be expected—that now he had done sufficient, and laboured enough? No one would be so disposed who remembers what his Saviour has done for *him*. Had HE hesitated to proceed in that blood-stained track of pain ere He had been raised to the cross; had He yielded to the horror of nature, and shrunk from a cruel death of shame and ignominy; had *He* put away the bitter cup and refused to drink it, or stopped short in His career of mercy, hesitating at the agony which He had to undergo ere man's redemption could be secured—where would have been our pledge for sharing the divine favour, and where our hopes of mercy from on high? Let every disciple and believer remember then, if he is to live with Christ in

glory, he must live on earth as He did—always coming nearer to the point of man's salvation. With the great apostle of the Gentiles, he must resolve to "forget the things that are behind"—to rise beyond all he has hitherto done for Christ; not only to *keep* what he has attained, but to reach forth with diligence to those higher attainments which still lie before him. And if such were the resolution and acknowledged duty of St Paul—if, considering all that *he* had done for the Gospel of Christ, considering the churches he had founded, the converts he had made, the perils he had braved, the labours he had accomplished, the martyr-death to which he looked—if such an one as Paul deemed it necessary that he should forget all those attainments that were past, and still to look forward to what was yet in advance, surely none on earth now may safely say, "We are satisfied, and may relax our labour for Christ, remit our prayer, suspend our studies of Scripture; we may leave our works of piety as they are, and stay the progress of the Christian life, or now leave it to the impulses of nature?" Oh no! All must rather press forward toward the mark for the prize of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Rather believe that as yet they have attained nothing in comparison of what *may* be won. No state of the religious life is more cheering than that in which the followers of Jesus show by their life and sentiments evidence of an *advance;* no state of the religious life more distressing than that which indicates the losing what had once been gained. Men must be true to themselves in the religious life; they

have the solemn assurance of God's word for *His* support, and that He who hath "*begun* a good work, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." To this all believers are sealed with the spirit of promise; this is, in fact, the earnest of their inheritance through Christ. We cannot therefore better conclude this division of our subject than by the prayer of St Peter for all who have resolved to live the Christian life, and to *persevere* in that life: "May the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that we have suffered a while, make us PERFECT, STABLISH, STRENGTHEN, SETTLE us!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AS AFFECTED AND MODIFIED BY VARIOUS *EXTERNAL* CIRCUMSTANCES.

In all questions which affect the religious condition of mankind—whether such questions relate to the *choice* of the religious life, or to its progress and advancement—we may notice two aspects under which they may be viewed. Under one aspect they may be referred to the pure operations of men's own minds, without taking into account the effects of anything from without; or they may be referred to the influence of external circumstances, and to the various relations in which men stand to the world and its concerns. Men, as intelligent beings, endowed with power of choosing or rejecting what is brought before them, are capable of determining within themselves what hold religion shall exercise upon their hopes and aspirations, independent of all circumstances extraneous to themselves. We may, in one word, estimate religious feelings and reflections as they lie within the recesses of man's heart—as we may suppose an inquiring mind would argue or meditate upon

them, which was buried in the deepest gloom of the strictest monastic seclusion, or in the wilds of nature, where the ordinary circumstances of social life are supposed to have no place, and to exercise no influence. We know that there is a direct and immediate agency of the Holy Spirit of God upon the minds of men, let their position be what it may, and which is independent of *all* external circumstances whatever. The whole tenor of the religious life, with its hopes and fears and joys and aspirations, may be elaborated within the secret recesses of a heart which has no intercourse with the world without; and thus a vast field of inquiry opens before us, even when we shut out from consideration all topics but the spirit of man, and the communications made to him through the revelations of God's own Word. But then, besides this internal process, we are also to consider every religious question as it is affected by the influence of worldly circumstances, and of many disturbing forces, which bear more or less upon the progress of the religious life. We must estimate the effects of *external* objects upon man's mental and spiritual conclusions; and it is the more necessary that we take into account the agency and influence of these external forces, because in experience it is found how much depends upon them. The spirit of man, we may suppose, to be willing. When in the presence of God only, he clings to what is right. He is desirous of pursuing the spiritual and hidden life. He would follow the narrow way that enters by the strait gate, and leadeth to life eternal.

But alas, in the same individual, how often the flesh is weak! And when beset by the fascinating temptations of the world, and the trials of ordinary existence —when lured by the vanities or secularised by the business of life—he then turns from that right path which he had before chosen and approved. He now seems rather in the broad path which passes through the wide gate, and leads all who pursue its course to sorrow and destruction. We may often meet in life with characters as different from themselves at different times, and under different circumstances, as if each were two persons. Indeed, little *he* knows of the difficulties or discouragements of the Christian life who has not viewed them and experienced them in conflict with the many trying circumstances of an earthly lot. We must bring forth to the external world the life of God in the soul of man. The piety of the Christian is not to be adjusted to the secret places of the earth, where the foot of man never treads, but it is to be adjusted according to all the circumstances with which it may come in contact. We are to consider the religious life not only in the secret chamber, but in the social walk of man's varied trials and occupations; and we should ever bear in mind this fact in connection with the present branch of our subject—viz., how much a *change* of external circumstances may operate upon men's minds, and *alter* their religious condition, even though at the time it seems fixed and settled. The case of Hazael is well known. How indignantly he repudiated the charge which the prophet, weeping, brought against him of future

cruelty and treachery—"But what! is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?" and yet, when the opportunity and the temptation came, he betrayed his royal master, took away his life, and ascended the throne of Israel. It is an oft-told tale; and, indeed, many have been strangely altered, morally and spiritually, by an alteration in the external circumstances of their life. Many a one who has practised piety in the peaceful retirement of a calm secluded life, has fallen under ruder contact with the temptations and snares of an evil world. Every one, therefore, should be prepared for such external changes, and should see that his principles are so firmly fixed, that no changes of his external circumstances shall separate him from the love and service of his God and Saviour. *That* piety has in truth no right principle of guidance, no sure ground of stability, which is so influenced by what is external as to vary according to the changing circumstances of the believer's lot in life; and yet we must be prepared to find that the religious life may be affected —may be shaken—may be cast down—by the changes and chances of this mortal life;—such, I mean, as by a visitation of sickness, by the ta of poverty, or of an accession of wealth; by disappointment, and the failure of life's schemes, or by a great success; by being left alone, or being mingled with the excitement of the world. To discuss these questions fully would require volumes. We can only notice a few of the particulars. And, first, let us consider briefly the effect of sickness upon the religious character—the inner spiritual life.

1. No doubt sickness has great influence upon the moral and physical feelings of those who are suffering under its attacks; we must expect, therefore, to find it affecting the believer in his spiritual relations; and, in fact, except these effects are counteracted, there may be very painful and humiliating results. Various reasons may be assigned for such effects of sickness upon the Christian believer. Sickness affects the animal spirits. At times, to the sufferer under pain or bodily ailment, everything seems dark and cheerless; faith becomes dim; the promises of God lose their brightness; hope languishes, and love seems to grow cold; and thus, as at such times all exertion becomes irksome, so the perseverance of the Christian believer is in danger of becoming relaxed, and the energy of the Christian warrior of becoming feeble, before the attacks of the great enemy of men's souls. In sickness, too, the temper often loses its equanimity; continued suffering, and the attention it requires, certainly have a tendency to make men *selfish;* and therefore it is beyond a doubt that it *may* happen, and often does happen, that the religious feelings which men professed in the day of health and strength fail them in the seclusion and debility of a sick-room, and they become discontented, gloomy, and dissatisfied with all around them. Sickness, therefore, is one of those *external* circumstances of life which try the inner spiritual Christian course; it furnishes a test of the sincerity of his professions while in health, to find that, in the time of sickness, pain, and languor, they support the Christian amid all its infirmities, and sustain the confidence of an undying

hope in the promises of a Redeemer. In this way it is, that whilst the time of sickness often tries the strength of the believer's principle, it is at the same time the hour of religion's greatest triumph over the weakness of man's faith, and the most glorious proof that the inner and spiritual life of the Christian has risen superior to all the external trials which can fall upon his path. The light of religious life shines more bright when it survives the day of health and strength and vigour. There cannot be a more beautiful or edifying spectacle on earth than the continued cheerful resignation and sustained hope of lingering disease. It proves that there is a love of Christ which can survive every trial—that amidst the decays of nature, the restless sleepless nights of the suffering mortal body, the cross of Christ is ever the support and comfort of the faded drooping spirit which trusts and loves the blessed Lord, who died upon it for the sins of the world. When we come, therefore, to consider visitations of sickness in connection with the progress and perfection of the Christian spiritual life, we must bear in mind that it may be, and often is, a great trial to many, especially to those upon whom it comes after years of health and freedom from the common ailments of life, cutting them off from former enjoyments, interests, and occupations; but then, too, we should remember how sickness may be the proof and consummation of the life of God, showing forth in bright and beautiful colouring the uncomplaining, resigned, unselfish, holy, generous, and grateful nature of the true Christian spirit under circumstances of external trial and bodily weakness.

We know nothing in the range of English literature more beautiful than the description of such a case in actual life, which Dr Arnold records in one of his letters. It is an account of his invalid sister, who died after a complaint in the spine of twenty years. "I never saw," he writes, "a more perfect instance of the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind—intense love almost to the annihilation of selfishness—a daily martyrdom for twenty years, during which she adhered to her early-formed resolution of never talking about herself—thoughtful of every one but of herself, save only as regarded her ripening in all goodness—enjoying everything lovely, graceful, beautiful, or high-minded, whether in God's works or man's, with the keenest relish—inheriting the earth to the very fulness of the promise, though never leaving her crib, nor changing her posture, and preserved thus the very valley of the shadow of death from all fear or impatience, and from every cloud of impaired reason, which might mar the beauty of Christ's, God's glorious work. May God grant," he adds, "that I may come but within one hundred degrees of her place in glory."

2. There is another external form or circumstance of human life which may not unnaturally be supposed to affect the Christian believer in his relation to the progress and advancement of the spiritual life; and that is, when struggling with poverty, or more especially perhaps when he has to meet a *change* from a condition of wealth or competency to the trial of a straitened lot. In the parable of the sower our blessed Lord has dis-

tinctly assigned as the causes for the failure of the hearer represented by the seed sown amongst the thorns, that the *cares* of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. Now this description may apply both to poverty and wealth. For as there can be no doubt that poverty increases the "CARES" of life, so it may increase those worldly emotions which grow up in the heart like thorns, and impede the progress of Christian piety within the soul. It is indeed a very painful exhibition of human nature, when we find that the loss of earthly mercies can incapacitate the soul from attaining the unsearchable riches of Christ.

But there are obviously (unless corrected) a class of feelings too ready to spring up in the heart which is b[illegible]d with the cares of poverty, feelings which are ho[illegible] to the calm and free exercise of the inner or spiritual life. Such, I mean, as discontent—the irritation of mortified pride, from the contempt and contumely of low and ungenerous minds; the privation of luxuries or comforts to which men have been accustomed;—these, and many other such feelings as these, will have a tendency to draw men from God, and leave them in a hard ungracious frame of mind as to their opinion of His dealing with them. Let the Christian believer, then, who is anxious to follow out the good results of practical teaching at the hand of God by a humble acquiescence in all His dispensations, and who is anxious to improve the dispensations of Providence—let such a one bear in mind, that if a state of poverty presents some

obstacles in the way of the Christian life, it *avoids* evils of equal or of greater weight. It has also its facilities, its means, and opportunities of following out and perfecting the details and self-denials, the patience and the resignation, of that life. There is an advantage which the poor man has in his Christian life and service which men may be surprised to find enumerated, but for which we have the authority of our Lord himself: and that is the advantage of making a more self-denying offering of Christian charity. When Jesus saw the *rich* men casting their gifts into the treasury placed adjoining the temple for receiving offerings from the faithful, He observed also a poor widow cast in her gift, which was the smallest coin current, and yet He declared she had cast in *more* than them all; and for this reason—*she* gave of her poverty, *they* gave of abundance: the offering relative to her means, therefore, WAS literally greater. And no charity can be more acceptable than the poor man's offering made at a sacrifice—taken from his necessities. God forbid we should undervalue the offerings of the rich—they are blessed when given in a spirit of love and truth. But whilst a rich man's offering *may* be a self-denial and a sacrifice for God, a poor man's offering is more likely to be so. In all thoughts regarding the welfare of the immortal soul, the poor man may well recall how expressly his Saviour declared, "Blessed are ye poor." He may especially note also the kind care of God's providence in the Gospel, that to the *poor* that Gospel should be preached; and should recollect that when He had to show us an

example of what our common human nature could be, when in the perfect form, He Himself for our sakes *became poor*. In the present state of human society we do not apply to persons so differently situated, the exhortations given by our Lord to some who were co-temporary with Himself—viz., that they should go and sell all they had and follow Him: of course, no such rule can be conceived applicable to our own day. But we certainly think such expressions of our Lord should instruct those who are born to poverty, or who become poor, that they may more readily acquiesce in such an appointment and such a dispensation for themselves, and then we may fairly ask those who are dissatisfied with a poor lot—who are disposed to repine, and to envy the plenty and splendour of a great and wealthy neighbour—to consider what are often the wretched consequences of such abundance; that many cases occur in human society, where, in young thoughtless characters, luxurious habits of selfish and self-indulgent excesses have been induced by a too ready command of wealth; and that a more humble lot and more circumscribed means might have been to such a safer and a happier lot. Let the poor man remember these things, and he will pursue his Christian course more cheerfully, and more satisfied with his privations.

3. But to pass to different circumstances of man's lot as affecting his progress in the inner or Christian life; *whatever* trials or difficulties may arise from being poor, there can be no possible question that the word of God refers to *riches* as oftentimes being a snare and an im-

pediment in the way of God's service. Thus Solomon: "The rich man is wise in his own conceit;" and again, "He that trusteth to his riches shall fall:" and Jeremiah gives this needful caution, "Let not the rich man glory in his riches:" and St Paul, "The love of money is the root of all evil." Our blessed Lord has Himself frequently referred to the subject, and has used those strong expressions which must at once forcibly recur to every reader of holy Scripture; as, for example, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" We no doubt explain such passages as being applicable to a state of society very different from our own; that they belong to a time when, to be a real follower of Christ, it was necessary to choose between His service and the world; that a true profession of the Gospel demanded a complete abandonment of fortune, family, friends, and position in life; that if men had to leave all to follow Christ when they had much to abandon, they had the greater sacrifice to make; and therefore, at that time, riches *were* a greater snare than now. Hence, in those days, it was natural to expect that there would be some who, like the young man in the Gospel, had great possessions, should be sorrowful and hesitating when called on to sell all they had and give it to the poor, and then in their voluntary poverty to go and follow Christ with *no* possessions but the cross they bore after a Master who had Himself given up all for them. But explain these passages as we may—and no doubt they admit of the explanation that they cannot be applicable in their strict literal meaning to all times—still they are

full of deep and solemn meaning, and lead to a serious consideration of the *universal* truth expressed by our Lord when He gave the universal caution (as detailed in St Mark), "How hardly shall they who *trust* in riches enter into the kingdom of God!" It is not the use of riches, but their *abuse*, against which we are cautioned; not the possession of riches, but the trusting to them for that which they cannot give, and which we ought to *know* they cannot give. So far from piety being necessarily connected with poverty, we know how frequently the case is reversed: vice and profligacy and profaneness too often stain the dwellings of the needy; virtue, religion, and benevolence often adorn the palace of the noble, the mansion of the wealthy. In our Lord's parable, had Lazarus been a reckless and godless character —had the rich man been a useful, humble, godly member of society—their ultimate condition would have been reversed. In hell, Lazarus would have lifted up his eyes, being in torment—the rich man would have been conveyed by angels to paradise in Abraham's bosom. The truth is, everything in this world, so far as good and evil are concerned, comes at last to be pretty equally balanced. If there are snares and obstacles thrown in the way of the Christian life by the possession of riches, we should always at the same time bear in mind that they supply facilities and advantages to those who are determined to apply them in the progress of the inner life. They afford relief from those cares and anxieties with which a poor man is frequently distracted, and they supply the means for doing good—for

promoting the glory of God in the diffusion of His truth, and the wellbeing of mankind—which a condition of poverty cannot supply. Hence the exhortation, "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor *trust* in uncertain riches, but in the living God," who, as the apostle declares, "giveth us richly all things to enjoy;" that is, He confers riches as a gift from Himself, and sanctions men in the enjoyment of them. But then he adds "that they do *good*, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;" then they too, no less than the poor man, shall "lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." It is glorious to think what a good man, who is wealthy, can do with his wealth—how, like Job, he can say in no *spirit* of self-righteousness, but in a pure spirit of thankfulness to God, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me. Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him, the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." Perhaps the greatest danger is to be apprehended from sudden *accession* of riches, by which the mind is thrown off its balance. Hence it was that John Newton, a close and skilful observer of human nature, visited, with a solemn countenance, for the purpose of *condoling* with a member of his flock who had received unexpectedly a large legacy. He knew how often it happens that accession of wealth has a most injurious tendency upon the kindly

and charitable feelings of those who become rich. He knew that experience tells of many an example where, with *small* means, there had been a generous and liberal spirit, but which unexpectedly increased wealth had chilled into a selfish refusal to give; therefore it was most wisely written, "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." There are other circumstances of man's earthly lot, besides those of mere wealth or poverty, which it may be expected will influence his moral and religious feelings. There may be in life, and in some persons we may observe a constant series of disappointments and calamities. Every plan formed seems to fail; every hope is frustrated; everything seems to conspire against them. Their motives are misinterpreted; friends are cold, and the world looks on unfavourably. It is impossible to imagine that persons can be absolutely *indifferent* to the question of the success or disappointment of human life, or that such circumstances will not in some measure bear upon the inner or religious life of man. But then we look to this inner life as having influence upon the *external* life; and when we take into account how great is the power of *grace* to exercise due control upon the tendencies of nature, we have no sympathy with the weakness of that spiritual life which allows itself to be entirely at the control of the ordinary circumstances which affect the common life of every Christian believer. It is, indeed, a sad account of that inner or spiritual life which varies in its tone just as external circumstances are prosperous or adverse.

What are we to think of a Christian believer prepared to make an earnest profession of religion so long as the world is favourable, and smiles upon his path, but ready to fall back and be discouraged in the day of adversity and of trial—who allows an unsuccessful course of life to blight his religious energies, and a great worldly disappointment to deaden his spiritual feelings? It would argue a great and fundamental defect. We look rather for the Christian in his inner and spiritual life to triumph over the drawbacks and difficulties of the daily life—that his religion shall preserve his spirit meek and humble under the trials of a prosperous course, and calm the perturbations of disappointment and worldly distress. There is a trial to man's religious duties—there is a trial to the Christian course both in this life's prosperity and in its adversity. It is a very important question how *he* shall preserve the religious life in its purity and freshness—who can take no onward step of his every-day journey that is not surrounded with the influence of wealth, power, admiration, and popularity. How can the faith of the Gospel of Christ, with all its humbling and purifying lessons, preserve its dominion over that man to whom the world is daily offering whatever tends most to kindle the imagination, mislead the understanding, or gratify the ambition? We answer unhesitatingly, it can only be done by keeping up that constant communion with God which belongs to the inner or spiritual life of the Christian believer—by realising things unseen to the common and worldly eye—by listening to those holy words which are audible only to the ear of

faith; it is only thus that man can preserve his spirit in a heavenward and devotional frame—in a calm and composed attitude, rising above the world amidst distress and sorrow, amidst worldly disappointments and mortifications. It is the inner life which must lie under and shine through the external life. As the outward man decays, and is rudely treated by the blasts of fortune, so the inner man is strengthened, and so the life hid with Christ in God passes on with tranquillity and with triumph. If we walk with our divine all-powerful Friend in faith and trust, in sincerity and truth, we shall find, not that we are absolutely independent of the external circumstances of sickness or health, poverty or wealth, disappointment or success—*that* none can be in this world—but we shall find that the inner or spiritual life will make the Christian believer more than conqueror over the enemies of his peace.

Take another case of external influences. There are persons more affected than others by being placed in scenes of solitude, or crowded amongst their fellow-creatures; and in estimating and preparing for the progress of the Christian life in regard to these circumstances, we should be on our guard against the evil effects of such influences. Perhaps the results are more specially remarkable when the Christian experiences the *change* from one to the other. There is a danger, *i. e.*, lest the believer who comes forth from the calm repose of a recluse or solitary life into the bustle and excitement of society—a danger lest he should be bewildered by the scene, or perhaps led away by its fascinations

from the more pure and more simple habits of his retirement. Or, on the other hand, it is to be expected that one accustomed to the performance of Christian duties and the conduct of a Christian life under the stimulant of observation and the collision of other minds, may droop and languish into habits of indifference or indolence when he finds his path become more retired and more solitary. This question, however, of retirement, as bearing upon the Christian life, will be more fully examined in the next chapter.

We may now close this division of our subject by recapitulating the general conclusion. The inner or spiritual life of the Christian believer then, we conclude, is intended for *all* external circumstances of man's lot—that Christian piety is adapted to the throne and to the cottage—to the loftiest and the humblest lot of man—to the philosopher and the peasant—to the highest prosperity and the most abased adversity ;—that under all these changes and vicissitudes of man's lot on earth, the interior life, which is hid with Christ in God, ought in every case to regulate and give the tone to the life which is outward and manifest to the world and the children of the world. Piety should give cheerful resignation to the chamber of pain and sickness. Piety should give simple and abstemious habits in the pride and vigour of health and strength. Piety should confer cheerfulness and dignity on a condition of poverty—should teach wealth and greatness moderation in their use, and consideration for others. Piety, when rightly directed, should promote humility and religious caution in the

day of prosperity, and sustain the soul in pursuing its heavenward course amidst the most discouraging and most adverse earthly lot. True piety can mingle with the crowd, and remain simple and devoted amidst the busy converse of the mart, whilst it loses no lustre, and abates no energy, in the shades of solitude and of retirement from the world. *These* are the powers and influences belonging to the spiritual life which is hid with Christ in God, and it is these very powers and influences which it is for every sincere follower of Jesus Christ, under the power of grace and the teaching of God's Holy Spirit, to make manifest in his daily walk and conversation through a world of trial, and of contest with its evil, and its temptations to evil.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE CONSIDERED AS TO ITS NECESSARY SECLUSION FROM THE WORLD.

In treating of the spiritual or inner life of the Christian believer in the previous chapters, we have endeavoured to describe and explain its real character as it has been portrayed in the Word of God. We pointed to some of those difficulties which too often prevent the full determination to *commence* that inner life in sincerity of purpose, and we have marked also those impediments which stand in the way of a vigorous *prosecution* of the spiritual life *after* it has been chosen. We have endeavoured to point out causes which retard the souls of men in their spiritual progress, and stay their advances to the degree of perfection towards which, under the power of divine grace, men are capable in this life of attaining. We have further taken up the question of influences exercised by external circumstances over the life of God in the soul of man. We have brought the spiritual life into contact with stern realities. We have considered how the Christian pilgrim may be

affected, and how he ought to be affected, by *such* circumstances as sickness, poverty, wealth, success, disappointment—a life of seclusion, or a life mingled with the crowd. Now, a further question lies before us as the subject of the present chapter—*if* these difficulties really belong to the full development of the spiritual or inner life of the Christian believer—if piety be liable to such vicissitudes—and if the Christian must be thus watchful, guarded, and ready for the combat—if an inner life is to be perfected which has different aims, different objects, hopes, and fears from the mere external or worldly life of man—the questions naturally occur at this stage of our subject, What degree of separation of the two is required; or, How *frequently* should such separation be made? What *extent* of exclusion of the world is demanded from those who have to lead that life which leads to heaven? This is an important inquiry, and bears upon much that is *practical* in carrying out the details of the spiritual life. There can be no question that much depends upon the right adjustment of the subject, and that on many occasions of struggle to maintain the Christian life a real benefit is conferred by a timely retirement from the excitement of society and the absorbing cares of life, in order to reflect and to meditate upon the path of duty, and to enjoy that calm hour of serious consideration which every one must have who would walk humbly and carefully with his God.

Now it is quite clear that this duty and this religious policy (as we may call it) is pointed out to us and enforced in many passages of Holy Scripture which have

direct reference to this point. Thus the Psalmist, who had much experience of the errors of the human heart, and its too easy readiness to depart from God, in Psalm iv. solemnly enforces the duty of a retirement from the world on suitable occasions: "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." Again, in Psalm lxxvii., "I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart; and my spirit made diligent search." So the prophet Jeremiah, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." And St Paul exhorts his disciples to "*examine* themselves whether they be in the faith, to prove their own selves,"—a duty which can only be performed in a condition of seclusion from the bustle and hurry of man's ordinary life. From these passages, and others to the same effect which occur in the Scriptures of eternal truth, it has been usual to infer that Christian duty *must* require an occasional retirement from the more active scenes of life, and occasional rest from its busier occupations — that some time must be reserved from the world for serious thought and sober reflection—that sufficient leisure must be set apart for preventing the pressing cares of ordinary life from so engrossing the whole heart as to leave nothing for the support and furtherance of the inner life of the Christian, or, as it is so beautifully expressed by the sacred poet,—

"Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to meet retired solitude,
Where, with her best nurse contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings

That in the various bustle of resort
Were all to ruffled and sometimes impaired."

All that we have now said bears upon the general question, and enforces the general conclusion that *some* degree of retirement, and *some* selection of time for reflection, are needful for the preservation and advancement of the Christian life. But a more decided and more specific duty has been maintained to be needful for the same object. A total seclusion from all that is usually termed the gaieties of life and society, has been enforced by a strict party in the Protestant Churches—and with such the prohibition has been applied to all theatrical entertainments, to all mixed assemblies of gaiety, nay, in some cases, almost to preclude permission to join in any social meeting at all; but to confine all such assembling of friends to purposes of devotion, or the promoting of charitable or missionary objects. Then again, in a different quarter of the religious world, a system of even more complete retirement and seclusion, for exclusive purposes of religious meditation and devotional exercises, had taken entire possession of the minds of men, and the MONASTIC life was long considered the perfection of human existence—as, in fact, synonymous with the spiritual life of man on earth. There seems in our own day a strong tendency to revive these feelings, and to restore in some measure the conventual life as a part and portion of our Church system. Much has been said on the spiritual advantages of such retirement. A state of entire seclusion from the ordinary cares and temptations of the world, under the

obligation of solemn vows and self-devotion, has been adorned with all the colours of an imagination glowing occasionally, no doubt, with the love of what is pure and holy, and with desires prompted by the longings for an ideal condition of transcendental piety. Hence the strong feeling that for so long a period prevailed throughout the Christian Church in favour of the monastic system. Much romance and morbid feelings were thrown into the popular representation of these religious institutions. There men were to find a peaceful asylum of piety and repose — there the world forgetting, by the world forgot—there in lives dedicated to God—there in a continual round of holy services, and fasts, and vigils, the souls of men were to be trained in earthly sanctuaries for the devotional services of the life above. The temptations and vanities of life, it was represented, found no place in these retreats of prayer and praise. The monastic theory was said to suggest and encourage the purest associations, so that when in a Christian country the eye of the traveller glanced over the landscape, he saw, rising in different directions, those conventual buildings in which holy men and women lived by strict religious rule, and followed out, uncontaminated by the world, that Christian life which others spoke of and admired, but which they alone practised, and in which, with them, heaven's occupations were begun on earth. Such was the *theory* of the monastic or the exclusive system of retirement from the world. It possesses in itself much to attract the imagination, and has many of the associations of poetic imagery, and at one time held a deep

and exclusive influence over men's minds. It has been sustained by very plausible arguments, and persons in our own day make no secret in advocating a return, or partial return, to the whole system. Under these circumstances it may not be out of place to introduce here the favourable and ideal representation of the monastic system, as it was intended to appear according to its past theory in this country. We shall then see, from unquestionable authority, how different was the theory from the practice—how different were the objects and purposes of the system from its actual results. In fact, viewing the dissolution of the monastic houses in the reign of Henry VIII., the sad condition into which they had fallen was abundant proof of a sad discrepancy between the monastic theory and the reality after it had been fairly tried. Take that theory under its most favourable aspect, and as for a time at least, whether rightly or wrongly, it seemed to have engaged the respect and reverence of mankind. "Here were men living under a threefold vow, by which they made a sacrifice of wealth, power, and the domestic affections of man's nature. They surrendered everything which makes life enjoyable. Their business on earth was to labour and to pray—to labour for other men's bodies, to pray for other men's souls. Wealth flowed in upon them—lands and possessions were laid at their feet. The genius of the age expended its highest efforts to provide fitting receptacles for the religious communities, and their majestic edifices towered up in sovereign beauty, symbols of the civil supremacy of the Church, and of the moral

sublimity of life and character which had won the homage and the admiration of the Christian nations. Ever at the sacred gates sat many pouring out relief, from a never-failing store of charity, to the poor and the suffering; even within the sacred aisles the voices of holy men were pealing heavenward in intercession for the sins of mankind, and influences so blessed were supposed to breathe around those mysterious precincts, that the outcasts of society, the debtor, the felon, and the outlaw, gathered round the walls of convents, as the sick men sought the shadow of the apostle, and lay there sheltered from the avenging hand till their sins were washed from off their souls. Through the storms of war and conquest the abbeys of the middle ages floated, like the ark upon the waves of the flood, inviolate in the midst of violence, through the awful reverence which surrounded them."—Froude's *History of England,* ii. 407.

Now to all extreme theories, however plausible, of exclusive separation from the world and its social intercourse, whether they proceed from the severe rule of Protestant discipline, or from the monastic system of the Romish Church, we should say there were two *prima facie* and general objections. The first objection is, that seclusion beyond a certain point seems to cut off the Christian believer from many duties, and to take him away from the means and opportunities of doing good to others. We speak now of that withdrawal of men from their fellow-men which is considered *in itself* as meritorious, and in itself leading to virtue and to God. Beyond a certain point we conceive the effects injurious rather

than beneficial. The desire to retire ought to show itself also in the desire to do good. And it is impossible to say how much that men ought to do for each other in the way of example, suggestion, advice, and remonstrance, is precluded by that system of religious separation which withdraws them entirely from human society. Such was not the lesson taught by the great Teacher, and the perfect example to his followers. *He* mixed so freely with the ordinary assemblages of men as to draw down the reproach that He was a gluttonous man and a winebibber—a friend of publicans and sinners. But He mixed in the social throng that He might do good to men's souls. He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. We may respect the motives of those who deem an entire separation from society necessary for their own spiritual course, but we cannot help regretting the good that may be lost by it. "On him," writes Dr Samuel Johnson, "that appears to pass through things temporary, with *no other* care than not to lose finally the things eternal, I look with such veneration as inclines me to approve his conduct in the whole without a minute examination of its parts; yet I could never forbear to wish, that while vice is every day offering her seducements, and stalking forth with more hardened effrontery, virtue would not withdraw the influence of her presence, or forbear to assert her natural dignity by open and undaunted perseverance in the right. Piety practised in solitude, like the flower that blooms in the desert, may give its fragrance to the winds of heaven, and delight those embodied spirits that survey the

works of God and the actions of men; but it bestows no assistance upon earthly beings; and, however free from taints of impurity, yet wants the sacred splendour of beneficence."

Then a second objection is, that even when most pure and faultless, a rigid seclusion is not the means of attaining the highest degrees of virtue for men to themselves; that it wants the trial and the test which are essential to the present service which we pay to God. On this point we would quote the opinion of Milton, as expressed in his prose works—a source from which the diligent student will find, amidst prejudices and errors, many passages, illustrative of moral and religious questions, unsurpassed in English literature for the music of their composition and the majesty of their sentiments:—

"As, therefore, the state of man now is, what wisdom can there be to choose, what countenance to forbear, without the knowledge of evil? He that can apprehend and consider vice, with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and *yet* abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, *he* is the true wayfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue unexamined and unbreathed; that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world; we bring impurity much rather. That which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary."

If we pass from these powerful authorities upon the general effects of the system of exclusive retirement from

the world to more special and detailed observation of the results and effects, we shall find the recluse or monastic system to have been, in practice, the most signal failure the world ever saw. However specious may have been the arguments in its favour drawn from the imagination and the fancy, or however flattering may have been the representations of what good and happy results the monastic system may at certain times, or under certain circumstances, have actually produced, still there can be no doubt that the foul and dark scandals fostered within the walls of the greater and lesser religious houses were most shocking. All writers are agreed upon this. Religious faith had sunk into superstition. Duty was a mere cold and formal routine of offices. The monks, who were freed from the ordinary spiritual discipline of the Church, and whose whole *internal* discipline had become relaxed, had travelled, by fearfully rapid strides, on the downhill road of human corruption. The whole system is grounded on mistake, and is wrong, because *contrary to nature*. God in his providence has ordained a certain order of the social system, and the natural desires and dispositions of mankind lead them to friendly intercourse and cheerful companionship. No doubt, in particular cases, such order may admit of being violated, and exceptions may be found to all rules; but on the general view of the question, we are convinced that whatever strikes against the natural order of the social system, and contravenes the usual arrangements of social life, will be found at last and in the long-run to produce suf-

ficient practical evil to counteract all speculative advantages.

But a further reason for the failure of a too exclusive retirement from social life and the intercourse with mankind is this,—such a scheme of life is opposed to the due admixture of the active and contemplative elements of man's nature. On the one hand, when entirely absorbed in the busy and stirring scenes of the world—when no time is appropriated to calm reflection, and no leisure allowed for serious thought and a review of our errors, our heedless actions and undisciplined thoughts—it is but too evident the man then becomes unequal to pursue a wise and prudent and religious course. The mind is dissipated; and when temptations arise, headlong excesses, wild mistakes, and great imprudences, are the result. On the other hand, it is equally obvious that no one can be in a healthful condition, or in a state suitable for action and for performing a part in the busy world, or be fitted for meeting the various emergencies of this checkered course of existence, when the recluse life which he has been leading renders active duty, to which he is called, a strange and unlooked-for condition. The ideas become narrow, the experience circumscribed, and men have the ignorance without the innocence of childhood. There is an unnatural and extravagant theory of seclusion from the world. The separation from vice, from vanity and passion, which takes place under that theory, is more in name than in reality. Men do not escape corruption by flying into solitude. The evil of man's nature pursues him into the desert

and the cloister, where it often assumes another and sometimes a more malignant form. The terrible corruption of the monastic orders sufficiently proves this. When once they departed from the rule of what had been intended, their corruption seemed to surpass that which was usually met with in the world; and such might perhaps have been expected, because close companionship is the greatest aggravation of actual vice and immorality, whilst seclusion emboldens the vicious by removing the influence of public opinion. There is this danger, also, in the over-estimate formed of the identity which subsists between abandoning *scenes* of vanity and abandoning vanity itself, as if to leave the haunts of folly were necessarily to be wise. A *spirit* of self-righteousness and self-complacency is engendered which only substitutes one form of weakness for another; and we have known well-intentioned and serious-minded persons who, because they rigidly abstained from the theatre and the ball-room, hardly asked themselves whether they were offending against the laws of Christian charity, or were not harbouring a spirit of pride and pharisaical self-righteousness. We would not be misunderstood on this point, or supposed to advocate an indiscriminate and unlimited mixture with worldly society; no doubt there are amusements and occupations which, from their own character, are dangerous, and that there are others not in themselves to be condemned, but which, from excess of indulgence, are most injurious to the inner or spiritual life, if not destructive of it. What every one should learn

who aims at following out the Christian life is, the true nature and character of a Christian withdrawal from the SPIRIT of the world. It is according to our blessed Lord's own description to be "in the world and not of the world." It is to *pass through* (not to leave) things temporal so as not finally to lose the things that are eternal. The Christian believer will ever take a lively interest in the concerns of time, but at the same time with a profound sense of the vanity of all human pursuits.

Now, it is quite evident this can only be accomplished where there is a power of withdrawing from the crowd and holding converse with God in occasional and periodical retirement; a mind may be duly trained to action, may be softened by the tender emotions of social and domestic affections, and yet have the power of realising devout converse with God in solitary places—or can make for *itself* a solitary place amidst the greatest bustle and most active intercourse of life. Examples are most useful to teach and to illustrate the lessons of abstract wisdom. Such occasional retirement for religious purpose, for reflection and meditation, was most beneficially the constant practice of a great and good man who for many years held a prominent place in the public offices of this kingdom—a man who in no common measure united the qualities of the man of piety, the man of benevolence, and the man of active business—I mean the late William Wilberfore, the happy effects of whose occasional and periodical retirement or seclusion during his most active and busy life has been thus described by his late eloquent biographer. We close this branch

of our subject with the quotation, because it so happily illustrates and enforces the degree of practical and useful retirement which the spiritual life seems to demand and require.

"He observed a sabbatical day in every week, and a sabbatical hour in every day. Those days and hours gave him back to the world not merely with recruited strength, but in a spirit the most favourable to the right discharge of his worldly duties. Things in themselves the most trivial, wearisome, or even offensive, had in his solitude assumed a solemn interest from their connection with the present or future happiness of mankind, while the alluring objects of human ambition had been brought into a humiliating contrast with the great ends for which life is given, and with the immortal hopes by which it should be sustained. Nothing can be more heartfelt than the delight with which he breathed the pure air of these periodical devotional retirements; nothing more soothing than the tranquillity which they diffused over a spirit harassed with the conflicts and the vexations which track the path of all who labour in the service of the Commonwealth." *

* *Sir J. Stephens's Biography*, vol. ii. p. 232.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE CONSIDERED IN ITS STATE OF FURTHER PROGRESS AND OF HIGHER ADVANCEMENT.

WE have hitherto considered the Christian life rather according to its difficulties and trials. But now, after suggesting the warnings that seem to be required when we witness the mistakes and struggles of the believer in his endeavours to run his appointed religious course on earth, we are desirous of contemplating, in the way of encouragement and stimulus, the Christian life rising above its earthly trials, overcoming its earthly difficulties, and approaching the perfection of its nature. It is no doubt a most useful exercise for us to dwell upon——what we believe the religious life is capable of attaining. We ask, What is it to be expected that, under the grace of God, man, as a follower of Christ, can accomplish? Believers who hesitate in the choice, or who falter in the prosecution of the Christian life when chosen, are invited to contemplate the happy results of perseverance in that sacred course of religious duty; in other words, to consider how blessed would be the inner life of the true

Christian were its aims and purposes once really accomplished, were its sources of terror, distress, and anxiety once to cease, and were its devotional aspirations realised and established.

1. Now, first, with regard to the great aims and purposes of the Christian life being fairly accomplished, we should bear in mind that what has been already stated really are the views and purposes which the two courses of life pursued on earth have before them. The life which belongs to the world and the concerns of the world looks for its highest attainment and reward in success, name, wealth, honour, ease, independence; the Christian or spiritual life, which men lead for God and the divine favour, has for its end eternal happiness, glory in the presence of God himself, a perpetual freedom from pain, parting, sorrow, and infirmity. Can we state the difference of their importance more fully or more forcibly than by saying one is for time and the other for eternity —one carries its pursuits into a country and a condition where the other will not be heard of. Let the life which belongs to the objects and interests of the world have all the success that can be gained in it—we know its termination. Boundless wealth, the most brilliant success in literature, arts, or politics, cannot confer a day upon the life of him who has achieved them. But the perfection of the Christian life, properly speaking, only commences where the earthly life ends. It is on this *final* consummation that the advanced Christian believer fixes his heart. His present life is but the early and imperfect dawning of a morning which ushers in the

brightness of celestial, unclouded, endless day. It may, whilst on earth, have many difficulties and sorrows. We can hardly, indeed, use for *our* present lot the description of early Christian lives by an apostle, who declared that, "If in this life only they had hope in Christ, they would be of all men most miserable." That time has passed away. But no doubt, still, there may be trials and sufferings, struggles and disappointments; but then, the Christian has learned to look to the issues of his present course, not here, but hereafter.

We must look to the Christian life, then, if we would feel its beauty, when its true spirit has been attained—when it has changed the heart of the believer, and raised his affections to heavenly things. If we would really desire to know that inner life, which it is the object of this treatise to explain and enforce, we must inquire of the Christian who has had personal experience of its blessedness, and we must study its character, not when it is weak and irresolute, but as it has assumed a firm and determined attitude before God. We can only judge of the principles of godliness by the fruit which they produce; and to know the loveliness of this life of God when active in the soul of man, we must see what it has made the poor in spirit, the mourners for sin, the pure in heart, the hungering and thirsting after righteousness. It is not the almost but the altogether Christian who can show forth the beauty of holiness, and make men desire to be with Christ. It is needful for the undecided and the worldly minded that we speak of the Christian life in its origin, that we warn them of its difficulties, and

caution them against backsliding and abandonment of their religious hopes. But to encourage the Christian pilgrim who has determined to follow Christ, and aspires to the *higher* walk of piety and self-denial, we take, as a standard and example, the man who has overcome the world and its fascinations. We point to the life of him who declares that in his Saviour's name he has "*overcome the world.*" It is a great point, when urging the happiness and the triumph of the spiritual life, that we can strengthen our argument by appeals to experience—by showing the principles which we recommend in full exercise. As an encouragement, then, to those whom we desire to pursue the Christian life, and obtain its great and peaceful privileges, we hold forth the example of those who have fully resolved to accomplish the ends and achieve the purposes which the spiritual life has suggested.

2. But we can point to another element of joy and satisfaction; and that is, when its causes of anxiety and alarm have ceased, or have ceased to exercise a baneful or oppressive influence upon the heart. So long as men are indifferent and cold to follow up the pursuits and strengthen the power of the inner or spiritual life, hid in their hearts with Christ in God, there *must* be many objects of terror and alarm. Temptation is to them a terror, because they feel uncertain whether they can resist it; sickness is a terror, because they fear it as a forerunner of death. And, certainly, death is a terror, because they feel unfit to die—because they are not sure that their sins are forgiven; and judgment is a terror, because

they feel unprepared to meet the Judge, and dread the sentence to which they may be subjected. The persons of whom we now speak are not, let it be remembered, those who have been absolutely indifferent to the spiritual life, and careless whether it has been pursued or not—these may have become insensible to such terrors, and, it is to be feared, often look upon them rather with indifference than alarm—but those who have been desirous of being followers of that which is good—who have been awakened to a sense of danger—who have been *anxious* to lead a godly and a Christian life, but yet have too often halted between two opinions, too often given up Christ and his lessons for the world and the vanities of the world. When such hesitating Christians are urged to go on, the appropriate encouragement is, that to the sincere and earnest Christian these things will ere long cease to be subjects of alarm. Subjects for anxious thought and careful consideration, temptation, sickness, death, and judgment, must always be to every serious mind; but they lose their power, and in Christ their terrors will pass away, and the Christian will be able to meet them in calm submission, and be able to survey them without being overwhelmed. How many temptations which once were formidable the advancing Christian is taught to meet without fear. Under sickness and infirmity, as coming from the hand of God, he bows before the chastener, and places his trust in God. Death, we are assured, shall lose its sting, the grave be deprived of its victory; for there is no condemnation to those that are

in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; and the promise of the Lord shall be fulfilled, that when he hears of the second coming of Christ, he may lift up his head with joy, for his Redemption draweth nigh. If such, then, be the power which the spiritual life of the Christian may hope to obtain over these enemies to man's peace and present enjoyment, surely we have a high vantage-ground and a stronghold in our argument with those whom we wish to be steadfast and immovable in the determination to pursue and perfect the "life of God in the soul of man." It is wonderful to think what a superiority over the ordinary objects of this world's terror and dislike is imparted to the earnest and advancing Christian pilgrim. *He* is comparatively little affected by any malady or temporary influences who feels that his Saviour is near him to comfort and support him—who knows how soon he is to exchange a scene of vanity and of trivial pursuits for the great realities of eternity. And when he has thought of all that is passing and of all that is to come, he feels deeply the great truth that *the time is short;* "and therefore it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none, that they that weep be as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." * How happily does this touching description express the believer's state of mind in regard to worldly cares and worldly

* 1 Cor. vii. 30.

interest—not indifferent to anything, but over-anxious for nothing.

3. There is another source of encouragement for perseverance in the hidden spiritual Christian life, and that is, the prospect of the time when its *devotional* aspirations shall be realised. All will be disposed to agree that the happiest moments of man's existence on earth are those in which he enjoys full and free intercourse of his soul with the Holy Spirit, and in earnest and exalted devotion. Whilst on earth—whilst encompassed with present infirmity—many are the hindrances which the believer meets with in his approaches to the mercy-seat on high. But as these communings with God become more elevated and more pure, he shall have some intimation of the joys experienced by angels and seraphs, and the souls of just men made perfect, above. The Beloved Disciple tells us he was in the spirit on the Lord's day—out of the body, freed from the burden of corruption, and holding unreserved and pure intercourse with the Father of Spirits. Such moments are not given to men on earth; but these things point out to us spiritual conditions *towards* which we may approximate, and the bliss for which God is preparing His children—to which He is bringing them through the inner life unknown, alas! too often, or, at least, too often untrodden by the ungrateful and the thoughtless. Oh! could he have one glimpse of that worship before the eternal throne of which Milton sung in such strains of matchless *earthly* poetry, or of which St John tells us in the more awful words of *divine* inspiration, how comparatively trivial and

unsatisfactory would then seem all the imperfect and unhallowed enjoyments of the world! These things we now see through a glass darkly, and understand imperfectly, but the new and living way to God through Christ lies open before us. Let those who have entered in at the strait gate, and are willing to *pursue* the narrow way, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Such, then, is a brief review of some leading points in that revelation made to us in Holy Scripture regarding the inner or spiritual life of every Christian believer who walks through a world of sin and frailty, not by sight only of visible and mortal objects, but by faith in the unseen and the eternal. However undefined and imperfect be the outline of it traced out—however inadequate the details by which the picture has been filled up—an attempt has been made to portray some features of the true nature and character of the inner and spiritual life, as it is distinguishable from man's ordinary mundane existence. Some of the *obstacles* by which it is frequently liable to be impeded have been already pointed out, and the attention of the reader has been called to some *encouragements* under which the Christian pilgrim may hope for ultimate success, and the full recompense of all his labours, his self-denial, and his cares.

Now, if the reign of holiness and peace and joy is *begun* now, and established in the Christian believer's heart on earth, he may well hope that it will be consummated in heaven. Yes, there is a magnificent reward to come, there is a glorious recompense which

awaits the faithful and persevering servant of his Lord. Amidst all his toil (and it may be great), under all his disappointments (and they may be many), the Christian should, from the recesses of that inner spiritual life which is hid with Christ in God, look forward to the day when its aims shall have been fulfilled, its objects finally secured, its terrors chased away, its anxieties made to cease, and all its devotional aspirations realised by unimpeded intercourse of the soul with God! Thus we may sum up the purposes and object of our present inquiry as a brief history or narrative of every Christian believer's inner or spiritual life, tracing that history through its various phases and its many aspects. We have sought to mark it when trembling under a sense of weakness and liability to error, when in danger through the temptations of the world, when rejoicing in hope, when overcoming difficulties by the power of grace, when triumphing over the weakness of man's nature, and when anticipating the more than conquest—the entire victory—over every spiritual enemy "through him who loved us and gave himself for us." The inner life of the Christian becomes, under these aspects, the forerunner of a life belonging to another and a higher world. It is the arena of a state of probation and imperfection appointed for winning the prize and the crown of immortal happiness. We may therefore consider the inner Christian life as at once the saint's TRIAL, the saint's REST, the saint's GLORY.

1. His present course on earth is the saint's TRIAL.

Who can pass through this state of sin and sorrow,

of weakness and temptation, who can experience this condition of severe tribulation, with its strifes and heartless animosities, its many inducements to do *wrong*, its many obstacles in the way of doing *right*, and not feel that these constitute man's present life a course of trial, and sometimes of severe trial? The Christian pilgrim may have his share of earthly sufferings (compared with worldly characters he may have *more* than his share), because, along with his fellow-men, he has present sorrow like others, he has bereavements, vexation, and disappointed hopes, frustrated expectations, and blasted worldly prospects. But, besides these, he has the trials which belong to his spiritual course. In fact, by having chosen the spiritual course, he may feel trials with more acuteness, because he is become more sensitive to suffering; his nature being more susceptible to the real evil of sin and to the moral misery of his fellow-creatures. He has not only to mourn with others the *temporal* calamities which have overtaken those who are near to him and dear to his heart, but he has to meet the bitterness of their religious shortcomings, and those defections in their life and character which he well knows must, to a fearful extent, affect their eternal and undying interests. The Christian believer may, in his course of the inner or spiritual life, have his trials even of which the world knows nothing. He may have to meet the struggles of a sorely-besetting sin, and to contend against all its harassing and degrading influences. Who but the wayfaring Christian pilgrim can tell of those trials which belong

to the Christian life when faith grows cold and hope is deferred; when he is harassed with doubts and misgivings; when clouds of darkness and despair interpose between his soul and divine things, and seem almost for a time to hide from him a father's face. Then may he lack sympathy and cordial feeling from those to whom he had looked for comfort and support, perhaps finding only coldness, mistrust, or misapprehension. Comparing what he is with what he *desires* to be, he may feel at times the pressure of the combined trials of his lot, compelling the sad complaint of the apostle: "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And may feel, too often perhaps, the sad petition of the Psalmist rising to his lips: "Oh that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away and be at rest!" And he may long for the day when he shall be called to inherit the home "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest." Those trials, the Christian believer knows, belong to a state of probation, to a condition which is preparatory to another. He must expect trial if he is to walk with Jesus—if he is to walk with Him who bore a cross, and who was emphatically termed "the man of sorrows," and whose steps were traced by blood. But these pains and sufferings, let it be remembered, form part of the discipline and the trial under which the spiritual life is carried on and perfected. They are intended for man's spiritual improvement, for advancing in godliness, for strengthening the FAITH, elevating the HOPE, and enlarging the CHARITY of those who are exercised thereby.

2. In this way the Christian may be sure that his trial is intended, under divine grace, to promote a holier and a happier frame of mind. He knows that after conflict will be repose. He knows that after the fight of faith, the conqueror over temptation and sin may look for PEACE: such was the direct promise of the Lord Jesus. He assures his disciples they should have peace—"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you." This peace, then, the believer feels assured, is in store for him according to this gracious promise at some time or other, and when, according to the purpose of God in mercy and in wisdom, it is right and fitting he should *have* it. He looks for rest in humble hope and a chastened confidence, a rest from present anxiety; not the full and perfectly calm and changeless rest that *remaineth* for the people of God, but a foretaste and an earnest here of what he may expect hereafter, of what he knows must come, when, in God's good time, the faith of the Christian will triumph over its obstacles, and hope will brighten in the rays of that Sun of Righteousness already appearing above the dark horizon of worldly clouds and earthly mists of prejudice and error, and soon to shine forth with unmitigated splendour, and arise above the world with healing on his wings. Where the Christian pilgrim has an entire trust in the promises of the Gospel, and in all the gracious assurances which it contains, there must at least be an opening before him of the paths of peace, there must be an insight to the haven of eternal rest. Can we trust

in the love wherewith God has loved us, and given his Son to die for our sins? Can we trust that he is willing and able to receive us and to save us, and *not* feel that we have a rest for our souls? Can we take his yoke and bear his burden? Can we hear him say to us "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," and *not* feel that we have grounds for believing confidently in the REST promised, even in this world, for those who trust in God and do his will? In attaining this rest, which is the inestimable privilege of the spiritual life of the Christian believer, men attain that "pearl of great price" which is more precious than all this world contains, and for which they ought to be ready to abandon all that they have of worldly ease and comfort. Of this great privilege, this priceless blessing, how many talk and think as if it were a matter of small importance. But were it only once become the hidden desire of the believer's heart that he should have a "closer walk with God"—a walk which the world may not discern, a walk which is nevertheless real and energetic as the daily life which the Christian leads before the world—then he may expect the rest and peace which God has promised to his faithful servants. Then farewell to all the anxieties and perturbations of earthly doubts and fears towards God—farewell the distresses and disturbances of all worldly cares for themselves—farewell the corroding thoughts of undisciplined passion—farewell the unkind words, the ungenerous thoughts and actions, towards others. The soul of man has now attained a firm footing of dependence upon the "Rock

of ages," and has found secure ground for its safety and its REST.

3. But still further, the Christian knows that when in his spiritual life, which is "hid with Christ in God," he has attained this rest, this peace in believing, he then feels that he may now enter fully into the "hope of GLORY"—of that full and future state of bliss and glory promised to the redeemed, only occasional glimpses or imperfect conceptions can be attained in this life. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into man's heart to conceive" the bliss and glory that are *reserved* for the final condition of God's children. But the believer's rest on earth is that which precedes and anticipates the believer's glory in heaven.

It may happen that the foretaste and anticipations of future happiness shall be sparingly given to man in his present pilgrimage through a world of trial and probation. There may be, for good and wise purposes, in the divine mind, occasional suspension of spiritual light and comfort; but he may be assured that though "heaviness endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning;" so that, whether *before* death he is in steadfast faith and hope, awaiting the hour of his departure from this life, and able to say with the great Apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day;" or whether, *after* death, with every anxiety hushed, and every fear gone, he awaits, in Abraham's bosom—the paradise of God, that fuller consummation of

bliss, that admittance to higher advancement nearer and nearer the eternal throne, which are only delayed till the general resurrection shall have given up the immortal bodies of the redeemed, and the general judgment shall have proclaimed their triumph, he is quite sure that a final and glorified state of being *will come*. It is only a matter of time; and he patiently awaits that time, for it is God's time. So long as the believer is on earth he must take heed lest he fall—he must watch and pray, lest he be led into weakness and error. But every humble and devoted disciple of Jesus, who has throughout an unseen and spiritual life followed Him, bearing His cross, may take to himself that assurance which earnest love and devoted purpose of heart shall give, that through grace he will overcome every obstacle to his final reception to heaven, conquer every enemy to his salvation, and at last enter into the joy of his Lord.

O that we all, "by continual mortification of our corrupt affections, may be buried with Christ, and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resurrection for *His* merits who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, even Jesus Christ our Lord!" Amen.*

* Collect for Easter Even.

PART SECOND

PART SECOND.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AS MODIFIED AND INFLUENCED BY MEN'S NATURAL QUALITIES AND DISPOSITIONS.

CHAPTER I.

THE VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH MEN DIFFER FROM EACH OTHER.

WE now enter upon a new branch of our subject—viz., the inquiry, how different capacities, how varieties of disposition and of natural temperament, amongst mankind, bear upon the *religious* character or spiritual life? St Paul, in 1st Corinthians xii. 4, evidently refers to this subject when he says, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit;" which means, that as Christian believers have by nature different powers, tempers, and capacities; so these qualities, however varied in themselves, may be influenced and brought into action in the same religious direction, and are all capable of spiritual improvement. However varied are the feelings and faculties of Christian men, they should all be placed under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and all made available for God's truth in the world. It could not have escaped

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the penetrating intellect of St Paul that such natural or constitutional differences did exist amongst his disciples. No Christian minister should be ignorant of the fact. *He* should, of all men, be skilled to read the varied page of human character, and make the due allowance for the different positions in which the providence of God has placed human beings. When we view our fellow-creatures in relation to this question, we cannot help noticing, on a careful survey of life, the great variety which prevails in the different conditions, faculties, and circumstances of mankind. It is marvellous to think of the broad lines of distinction by which human beings are separated from each other. Take some of the extreme cases produced by our social condition in this country, with which all are familiar. We discern, in one portion of our population, individuals born in poverty, nursed in hovels, with all the wretched circumstances of filth, rags, and vice; struggling almost from birth with the cares and difficulties of procuring a mere subsistence, and going through life, in its varied phases of misery and degradation, to its close and last retreat —a pauper's grave; without having raised themselves above the poor and sordid lot to which they were born. In another quarter we see persons so placed that they are treated from their first entrance into life with the utmost care and tenderest solicitude. All that wealth and unwearied assiduity can accomplish, is put forth to smooth the path of the mortal pilgrim through a world of sin and sorrow. The greatest differences are observable, also, in the opportunities and means of acquiring

knowledge, and of forming a virtuous and upright character. Some men are, as it were, *forced* to be orderly and virtuous, trained and fashioned by education from their infant days; others are debarred from the most ordinary acquisition of human knowledge. Some have before them, from earliest days, only motives and examples of virtue; whilst others see nothing but what is vicious and corrupt, hear no lessons except the incitements to fraud, and dishonesty, and impurity. That there exist such differences of external circumstances amongst different individuals, is no doubt a great mystery; and the reasons can be known only to Him who knoweth all things, and who in wisdom and benevolence governs the world, and directs all human affairs. The fact, however, is indubitable, and must have its influence on the question of the inner spiritual life. But besides this difference in their external circumstances, how great a difference exists amongst the sons and daughters of men as to the endowment of talent and of mental power! How varied are the *abilities* of men! Some appear as if born to the inheritance of mental superiority: acute, keen, and piercing in intellect, they master, as if by intuition, every subject they approach. They are found capable of meeting every difficulty which occurs in their course of life; science, history, art, and philosophy are alike under their control. They can at once appreciate the efforts of powerful minds, and enjoy the productions of genius as something kindred with their own. Some, again, are slow in apprehension of questions which come before them; on many

points they are utterly incompetent to form a judgment, and the highest productions of human intelligence are altogether beyond their sphere of comprehension. What costs *them* a great expenditure of labour, and much time for consideration, is attained by others almost without an effort. Besides this difference of talent, we have that infinite variety of disposition and of temperament, which tells so wonderfully in the intercourse of life. Some are of a reasoning and speculative character, making every question a subject for argument and discussion, whilst others view all questions *practically*, and care little for abstract reasoning. Some are sanguine and full of hope; others are depressed and grave, with a tendency to despondency and gloom. There are characters where fancy and imagination predominate over all other mental qualities, and where the whole man is the slave of passion and emotion. And again, on the other hand, there are dispositions where all questions are decided by the strictest rules of prudence and of propriety, where the judgment is never misled by the feelings, and where the suggestions of passion and of emotion are always subjected to reason. There are equal differences in men's *manner*, and in the influences which they exert over each other: whilst some are repulsive and ungainly, cold and distant, others have a grace which wins all whom they accost, and an address that has a charm which none can resist. All these, and many more which we might enumerate, may be reckoned under what the apostle terms "diversities of gifts;" and these diversities of gifts amongst man-

kind, whether of external circumstances, of talent, of disposition, or of manner, form a very curious and a very important subject for our reflections on the ways and providence of Almighty God. This is a feature in the divine administration of the world, of much practical importance for us to consider and to improve. The great God and Father of the world, had He thought fit, might have made all men more nearly resembling each other in their circumstances and qualities. He might with a more equal hand have distributed gifts and talents amongst His children. But this is not the method of His providential kingdom. Men differ widely from each other in their several positions. Scarcely two are exactly under the same circumstances, scarcely two are precisely alike in talents and disposition; and God intends that His glory shall be promoted, and moral and spiritual good advanced in the world, by thus making men to differ. We must not term such differences *accidental*. As the apostle declares "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit," we are evidently to understand that, as all gifts proceed from God, all, therefore, are connected with the same spiritual administration, and therefore they are all to be brought to bear upon the spiritual life. Before, however, entering upon any examination of *particular* differences in the gifts and dispositions of the characters we meet with in Holy Scripture and in the world, as affecting the spiritual life, it may be desirable to consider two questions connected with such differences:—1st, The general purposes intended by the divine Governor of the world in the vast varieties of

powers and gifts and mental capacities by which His rational creation is distinguished; and, 2d, By considering the special obligations which devolve upon every Christian to consider well the faculties with which he is himself endowed, and the gifts with which he is intrusted, as well as to consider also the powers and faculties which have been *withheld.*

I. Without presuming to inquire too curiously into the counsels and purposes of Almighty God in His government of the world, much of which is of course involved in mystery and above our comprehension, we may readily discover many wise and beneficent ends contemplated in that great variety of human gifts, powers, and capacities which we find prevailing in the world. So many and various are the ends to be answered in the providence of God, that they require variety of instruments and agents for their accomplishment; and when all are acting under a sense of God's presence, and the responsibilities attached to each, it will be found that every human being has some peculiarity which adapts *him* for some special work which he may do for God and for His truth. It is a wonderful subject for our contemplation to mark the varieties of powers and qualities which exist in the kingdoms of Almighty Providence, and at the same time to mark how they all harmonise and co-operate in producing those ultimate results which were intended by infinite power, goodness, and wisdom. Nay, more than this, we find instruments and agencies, which at first sight seem *incongruous* and inconsistent, still working together to

attain the best ends, and promote beneficial objects. Observe this principle at work in the *natural* world. There we have the varieties of climate, soil, and production—the heat of summer, the cold of winter—storms, sunshine, calms, floods, and droughts—and yet these elements, discordant and opposite as seem at first their qualities and attributes, are all found to fulfil each some appropriate office in the providence of God, and all combine to advance those benevolent objects which are intended to spread throughout the bounds of God's creation. Thus it is said that whilst the shower and the sunshine fertilise the soil, and bring the fruits of the earth to maturity, the storm and tempest purify the atmosphere, and destroy more of what is noxious than of what is useful. It would be easy to multiply examples of differing elements combining in the natural world to produce beneficent and useful results. But we may trace the same analogy, and observe the same consequences, in the spiritual world—the kingdom of grace—the Church of God. There the great diversity of men's gifts—the various powers with which they are invested—the various degrees of the *same* quality, or the number of *different* qualities, distributed amongst mankind, are all given to show forth the glory of God, and may, under the teaching of grace, be made to bear upon the one great and noble end. Even the evil qualities of bad men are often, in God's hand, the unconscious and involuntary instruments of His glory. Thus, it is said, "The *wrath* of man shall praise God." *

* Ps. lxxvi. 10.

Each individual may, in fact, consider himself as intrusted with a portion of God's work. He should bear in mind that his own place, and his own opportunities, are appointed by God Himself, and to *Him* he is responsible for the way in which he acquits himself.

The great fact which *all* men, whatever be their position, talent, or influence, should bear in mind, and practically act upon, is—that the gospel of Jesus Christ is intended for all. It is adapted for all, and so suited to the wants and errors of mankind—so fitted to call out men's powers and capacities—that when they remark its application to their own particular case, they may suppose that it was intended and constructed as if *they* alone had been appointed for carrying out the purposes of God in this gracious economy of salvation. However numerous, then, may be the diversity of gifts, or the varieties of God's endowments, it is the same Spirit which breathes through them all, and consecrates them all. The throne itself is established by righteousness; piety is the brightest jewel in the crown, and the true source of dignity and of honour to the sceptre. The highest functionaries in the land, the ministers of state, the judges and the rulers, show forth the true greatness of their office and their station when the spirit of religion pervades and directs their conduct. The highest circles of social life, the most distinguished scientific and literary reputations, the wealth of the merchant and the wisdom of the patriot, are blessed when they are under the influence of the religion of Jesus. Passing downwards in the social scale, the occupations and professions of its

middle life: here we look for the sources of a nation's honour, and a nation's prosperity—here should be found a home and resting-place for the virtues and the graces of the gospel scheme of salvation. And never may we fear for the stability of a people's welfare when it stands on such a basis; and we will never doubt the welfare and happiness of our own beloved country, so long as religious principle and Christian piety are enthroned in the hearts and homes of her middle ranks. But the gospel, and the influence of gospel lessons, have no localities. The farm—the manufactory—the cottage—the workhouse—all partake of the same privileges, and all rise to honour and respectability from the same causes. The virtues of a peasant, the religious lives of labourers and artificers, ever form the *best* materials of a nation's strength, and ever contribute most largely to a people's honour. The cottager's fireside—be it the meanest hovel which shelters penury and want from the fury of the elements—when hallowed by God's worship and service; and the lowliest cottager, when a man of God walking in humility and virtue, training his family in the paths of peace and godliness, and encouraging all around him to pursue the same course by a consistent undeviating adherence to the lessons of his Bible and his minister—these shall show forth, in their own sphere and station, the greatness of man's destiny, the power and loveliness of religious truth, in the same way as the example of the noble and the learned, of the rich and powerful, produce these results according to *their* sphere and station. In this manner we clearly see how there are

in the Christian Church diversities of gifts and of endowments assigned by God to His own children; and yet we can discern how they all, in the course and progress of the Christian life, may conduce to the glory of God and the advancement of His truth. Take the man of lofty and commanding talent—the man of address and energy, whose place is amongst the rulers and princes of the people, who can command the attention of the high-born and the wealthy of the land—what a field of usefulness *he* has in serving the righteous cause! He may descend to humbler spheres, and do good in low places; but another walk is defined, another place marked out for him. He can serve the Lord Jesus Christ in spheres to which others have no access, and where God has given him a portion of the vineyard to his own special charge. Then, in another sphere of Christian action, a man of altogether different habits and endowments is best qualified for the work of God. There is a spirit of infidelity abroad: lax opinions regarding the authority of Scripture, or the person and character of Christ, are prevalent in society; dangerous and speculative books are gaining access to the minds of the unstable, and injury arises to the cause of Christian truth. *Then* there is a call for the labours of the man of learning and research. The student sends forth from his retirement the lessons and the correction which are needed for the exigencies of the times. The conclusions and the examinations of the scholar are now requisite. The pen is the active opponent of heresy and error, and the office of the man of letters and of literary labour

becomes essential. And, once more, a man of very different qualities and temperament from either of these may be required for searching out the wretched inmates of our city lanes and alleys, and bringing them into contact with the decencies of life and a knowledge of religion. It is wonderful sometimes to trace the providence of God in raising up instruments specially suitable to the times on which they are fallen, and specially suited to meet the circumstances of trial and of struggle with the difficulties of the period. When the aggressions of the Church of Rome had risen to such a height that they seemed impregnable from the secular powers arrayed in their defence, and when the selfish interests and personal aggrandisement of ecclesiastical power were pledged to their continuance, a Luther was raised up for the great work of Reformation. Bold, fearless, energetic, and determined beyond all precedent, he had those qualities—nay, even those faults—which, humanly speaking, a reform, such as we consider needful, seemed to require. Then, again, in our country, such an instrument as Cranmer was specially required, with different qualities, and whose gentleness, forbearance, and even timidity, were calculated to prevent rash measures and dangerous extremes. But the same principle holds throughout, from the highest and the most stirring of public events to the quiet tenor of the humblest life on earth. Every man's place and duties are to him of the greatest value and importance. There is an under-current of human life, no less considered in the sight of God than the great and overwhelm-

ing torrent of this world's public interests and affairs. Christian men, according to their several gifts and opportunities, are, to fulfil the duties of their inner or spiritual course—to visit the sick and console the sorrowing—to administer to the wants and necessities of the poorer brethren—to allay discord, and make peace between those who are at variance—to show forth the calm graces and benevolent virtues of the Christian life amidst provocations and trials, amidst the cares and distractions of the world. These are duties and obligations no less than the cares of high state office, and the great functions of governing an empire.

Whatever happens to the Christian believer, then—whatever variety of places and persons he may encounter—let him recall the solemn declaration of the apostle, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." The gifts of fortune, of intellect, of influence, or of circumstance, be they high or low, much or little, elevated or humble, must be placed at the service and control of the great Head of the Church. Let every one remember that, in possessing those gifts, he has a defined place and duty appointed. To him the salvation of his own soul is of more worth than the riches of the universe, and "he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Prov. xvi. 32). We may see, therefore, in this way, some of the general objects and purposes under which men are so differently constituted, both as to external circumstances and as to mental endowments, and we shall at once discern important moral

results arising to the believer's mind from a serious and earnest impression of this doctrine.

II. After having duly estimated this general view of God's providence in these diversities of gifts, every Christian should consider well the gifts with which *he* is himself endowed, as well as those which are withheld; and, first, it would make every one satisfied with his own lot, his own gifts of Providence, his own powers and capacities for good, because it would make him feel that his position and his gifts were assigned to him by his heavenly Father, the great Disposer of all earthly events. It would at once remove, too, every feeling of jealousy and dissatisfaction at the gifts of *others:* because, once persuaded that every one's position and gifts were of the Father's own appointment, each would be satisfied with the share assigned to him by God Himself. Oh, it is a great point gained when we can truly say and feel that we have a work to do for God—that we are fellow-workers with God. It gives dignity and importance to every man's course in life; and we have no doubt that it is in this sense that St John in the Revelation applies the appellation there given to *all* believers—viz. "that they are kings and priests unto God," as acting under Him in a great and holy capacity. It is of vast importance in human life for every man to know his place and to know his work.

And, secondly, this view of the doctrine of a diversity of gifts under the same Spirit would inculcate another great lesson on the Christian believer—it would teach him that he should join *religious* motives and *religious*

obligations with all he does and all he possesses—it would make all his powers to bear upon the wellbeing and advancement of his Christian life. Whatever are our gifts, it is the Spirit that stamps their value and importance under every position, and according to every relation in which we stand to others. The prophet Zechariah asks, "Who hath despised the day of *small* things?" In fact, when we are living to God, there is no "day of small things." Whatever promotes the glory of God and the salvation of man's soul can never be a *small* thing. Before God, nothing on earth is great, and nothing is little, except in so far as it is in harmony or in discordance with His will and commands. The man who uses his small gifts well and conscientiously and diligently for God, does more in the scale of moral and religious duty than the man who, in a far higher place, and with far more commanding powers and gifts, is careless and inattentive to his duties and obligations. How admirably is this encouraging doctrine illustrated by our blessed Lord, who declared of the poor widow's offering, that, small as it was, yet, on account of the sacrifice she had made, it was actually *more* esteemed than the offerings of the rich! Every one should be contented with the place and duties assigned to him in the great family of mankind, and he should show his contentment by doing his best to promote the success of that which is committed to him. In the spiritual life the position of one man is just as important as the position of another. The Christian believer can but use his gifts to God's glory and to his own spiritual advance-

ment, whether those gifts are exercised on the great arena of the world's observation, or in the humble walk of Christian duty, or in the self-examination and religious exercises of the sick-chamber. And O how wonderful it will be, at the last day, to see the different estimate formed of human gifts and opportunities before the tribunal of the great white throne, from that estimate which men are too ready to make of them *now!* How often will the first here be last there, and the last here there be first! At that tribunal the rule of judging and rewarding will be, not the greatness or splendour of the gifts, but the *use* which has been made of them. The towering intellect of the wise, the brilliant genius of the man of high imagination, the power of leading and directing others, and acquiring untold riches for itself, may all have their great and glorious place at the right hand of Christ on the throne, if the Spirit have directed the use of these noble qualities and capacities; or they may shrink into insignificance, and pale before the humblest deeds of Christian godliness, before the patience and the faith which the world never knew, and which sought not the world's notice or the world's applause. In one word, it is the USE made of gifts and opportunities under the influence of the Holy Spirit by whom they are conferred, that really constitutes the worth and acceptance of the Christian character. How will it adorn what is great! How will it elevate what is lowly, and render illustrious what is obscure!

The conclusion, then, to which we arrive in the whole matter is, that every individual should enter upon the

Christian life satisfied with his position and opportunities of doing good, be they much or little, brilliant or humble. He is to make use of every opportunity of serving God and promoting advancement in holiness and Christian virtues. He is to pray for the blessing and co-operation of the Holy Spirit upon everything he undertakes; and his reflections on his own powers and peculiar circumstances should lead him to a living practical illustration of that homely and admirable description of the Christian believer's object and desire, given in the Church Catechism—viz. "that he do his duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call him."

CHAPTER II.

CLASSIFICATION OF THESE DIVERSITIES IN HUMAN CHARACTER.

WE have already considered the declaration of the apostle Paul, that "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit;" and have considered the remark in reference to the great fact of the immense variety which we find prevailing in the outward circumstances, the talents, and dispositions of Christian believers. There are two classes of circumstances in which this diversity prevails—a diversity in the gifts of fortune, position, talent, and opportunities; and there are the diversities of *disposition* and of constitutional tendency in mankind. It was with the first class of gifts that we were chiefly occupied in the last chapter. We would now consider, therefore, some of these differences of natural disposition as they subsist amongst Christian believers—differences which seem to be impressed upon their original constitutions, and to form part of their very nature, so as to distinguish them from others. This difference in temperament and tendency is quite apparent in the characters we meet with in

Holy Scripture, especially in the New Testament; and, as a general fact, we are led to the conclusion that *grace, in changing the heart, does not alter the natural dispositions of men.* These remain distinct and peculiar as before, and may be observed to act upon their *religious* life, just as they had acted upon their *secular* life.* But as an illustration of individual difference, take four prominent and leading characters of the New Testament —St Paul, St Peter, St John, and St James. These inspired servants of God are all animated by one spirit, all strenuous for one object, and all bending their powers and faculties in one direction; all living the inner life: still there remains the *individuality* of each. Each is separate, and each has his own distinguishing characteristic as a human being. Their natural characters as human beings are not changed when they assume even the character of inspired apostles; they are still Paul, Peter, John, and James. But perhaps it may be best to allow the four apostles to speak for themselves, and describe their character in their own words. St Paul, as the apostle in whom was most conspicuous the intellectual faculty, rests his defence upon his own sound reason: "I speak forth the words of truth and sober-

* We cannot help thinking, too, that, to a great extent, *national* character also has its effects upon the development of religious feelings. The orderly and methodical character of England finds the routine of her sober ritual a congenial manifestation of her religious emotions; the intellectual and abstracting tendencies of the Scottish mind chooses reasoning rather than ritual; whilst the excitable and unreasoning Italian delights in forms which give scope to the fancy, the passions, and the imagination.

ness;" and in like manner he directs others to satisfy *their* reason—"Prove all things." St Peter thinks only of expressing his ardent feelings for his Master: "Though all men should be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." St John resolves the whole knowledge of God, *as well* as the whole rule of life and conduct, into the affections: "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love;" and again, "This is love, that we walk after His commandments." And the practical St James asks energetically what is profession or feeling without practice: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? Faith, if it hath not works, is dead."

Now it is a striking feature in the history of the gospel, that there *should* be this marked variety and diversity in the gifts and graces of these four distinguished servants of God. It may also be considered as an internal evidence for the truth of the sacred narrative. We feel assured that we are dealing with *real* persons; we are conversant with men who have been in the world, and thought and acted in the theatre of life; we seem to ourselves almost as if we had *known* them personally. Their individual characters stand out in bold relief, and discriminate them as human beings from each other. And it is still further remarkable that these four apostles are the types and representatives of four great classes of character subsisting in the church generally; and they furnish examples of that diversity of gifts spoken of by St Paul, by which Christian believers are distinguished from each other. I refer

now to the fourfold division—the Intellectual character, represented by St Paul; the Imaginative or Impulsive, represented by St Peter; the Affectionate, represented by St John; and the Practical, represented by St James. It is not to be supposed that each apostle has no *other* quality than the one specially attributed to him. It is not, for example, to be supposed that St Paul has *no* imagination, *no* affection, or is *not* practical. What is meant is, that certain qualities distinguish each apostle —form, as it were, the basis of his moral character, and that generally peculiar dispositions distinguish minds, even those inspired, and placed in greatest prominence in the Church. Thus in St Paul we find the predominance of the high *reasoning* faculty in all his writings; St Peter, in almost every recorded act of his life, evinces the ardour and impulse of a susceptible temperament; in St John we find the prevalence of love as a motive to Christian devotion; whilst in St James we find everything brought to the test of experience and of practical results. We shall endeavour to illustrate these four *types*, as we may call them, by examples of similar characters which have been found in our own Church. And although this is not a subject which may readily occur to any one for his practical consideration, still it must be of great importance in explaining many circumstances which tend to modify the formation of Christian character in different individuals.

1. It would, in the first place, illustrate the declaration frequently referred to—viz. that all God's gifts come from one and the same Holy Spirit. All the

varied faculties of men may serve to promote his religious life, and be employed in the great work of his salvation. The intellect, the imagination, the affection, and plain common-sense, are all aids and allies to religion. The highest powers of reason, the richest fancy and most exuberant imagination, the tenderest and most devoted love, the most acute practical wisdom and prudence formed from long knowledge of the world and experience of life, have each their place in doing the great work of God on earth. These qualities are in human nature; and the gospel was intended, not for individuals of one class, but for the whole race of mankind. Four great apostles of the faith bore, as individuals, marked differences of character and disposition. We may expect, therefore, to find the same differences in *uninspired* men, and we may be sure all these powers and faculties are intended to concur in doing homage to the gospel, and to be called into exercise in the religious no less than in the worldly life of man. The highest power of intellect may be fully occupied in studying and unfolding to others the wonders of that scheme of mercy devised for man's salvation, into which angelic intelligences delight to search, and which is eminently distinguished as the power of God and the "*wisdom* of God." The most imaginative and ardent disposition can find its free exercise in following the successive steps of grandeur and mystery in a scheme so far surpassing all power of human fancy. The most ardent affections that ever burned within the heart of man could not reach the height of Christ's love, which passeth

all knowledge or conception, and which demands, as a return, all the love which *we* can give. And active *practical* believers are stimulated to the purest and the strictest attainments of obedience, when they contemplate the precious ransom paid for them and their salvation, by which they were bought with a price, and are therefore no longer their own, but owe every faculty and power to Him that bought them.

2. Then, again, another result would follow from marking this diversity of gifts in the most eminent Christian characters—we would be moved to look out for those qualities, and study them, in each particular case where they were most prominent. We should learn the great truth, that in no one individual, however eminent, will be found the perfection of all Christian qualities; and this would teach us that we should receive the gospel of Jesus Christ in all its breadth and fulness of application to the various wants and weaknesses of human nature. We should learn to call forth all our own powers and faculties in the service of Christ, and where we felt our own deficiency in the qualities and dispositions of Christ's followers, we should be able, most certainly and effectually, to supply it by a diligent study of the life, writings, and doings of God's servants, where those qualities and dispositions most abound.

3. Another very important and practical result of this observation on the varieties of Christian dispositions and Christian qualities would be this, that we should mark those cases, either in ourselves or others, where the character is *deficient* or entirely wanting in any one

of those Christian qualities, which, in combination, make up the complete circle of the Christian graces. This leads us to notice a character met with in the Christian Church, and a character which has taken sometimes a very prominent part in its affairs—a character which has no type or representative amongst the apostles and inspired founders of the Christian Church, *because* it is so wanting in a quality essential to the Christian character. Reserving, therefore, for future consideration, a more special development of the four classes already referred to, we first take into consideration a fifth class; not as forming a case of particular graces, but a case of particular *deficiency* of grace.

In the annals of the Church of Christ there appear at intervals individuals of great ability, considerable influence, and much zeal, for whose character we have no type in the annals of the New Testament. We mean the character that is without love, not merely where love is not predominating or conspicuous, but where it does not seem to exist, or form an element of the religious life at all. It is a singular phenomenon, that Christian believers may possess so much zeal and anxiety in the cause of God's truth, and yet utterly fail in that which should *distinguish* the follower of Christ from the mere man of the world. Such men may have qualities, which are in themselves virtuous and moral; still, according to Scripture judgment, the imperial good quality of gospel discipline is wanting. Their very virtues assume a fierce and fiery aspect, their zeal is developed in persecution, their love of truth in bitterness against their opponents.

One might almost be tempted to refer such conduct to positive infidelity, and to believe that those who act in this spirit must be unbelievers, who set at nought those commands which *they* are resolved to disobey. But this would not be a fair conclusion, because many such persons have suffered martyrdom, and suffered heroically, for their religious belief. Nor would it be just to say that they have no zeal for religious truth *as* Christian believers, but only a blind and infuriated zeal for the opinions they advocate as political partizans. They have really a zeal, and they are described by an inspired apostle as having their zeal, but *not according to knowledge.** It is not, therefore, so much the opinions which have been maintained by this class of members of our Church — nor is it their excess of zeal which we would condemn—but rather it is their *manner* of defending what they consider to be the truth, and their mode of dealing with those whom they consider its opponents. Sincere in their abhorrence against all opposition to what *they* consider the right way, their indignation against mere error of judgment, against a conscientious difference of opinion, and different estimate of outward forms, is expressed in a bitterness and vituperation which are inconsistent with the spirit of Christian charity, and which could only be excused as directed against unblushing profligacy and malignant perversion of Christian truth. Such characters are ever apt to exaggerate the importance of points of difference, and to charge opponents with consequences

* Rom. x. 2.

and conclusions which they themselves are strenuous to disclaim. Such persons have no relentings — no visiting of a compunctious or tender spirit. In the fierceness of their hostility to the errors they condemn, they have no pity for the erring, make no allowance for early habits and associations, or for conscientious scruples in the hearts of those to whom they have opposed themselves. From this class of minds has proceeded the fierce anger of persecution for religious error, and the Christian Church at one time gloried in her Inquisition —a systematic and organised tribunal, of which the express object was to destroy men's bodies for the judgment of their own minds, and the conclusions of their own conscience. And of those men, no doubt, many thought they were doing good service, for they did not even scruple to beg the divine blessing upon their work of death and torture. It is a melancholy reflection, that from the bosom of a religion of peace—from the hearts of men who professed to be followers of the meek and gentle Saviour, such characters should arise—characters who, whatever gifts they may possess, possess not that gift of charity which, of all Christian graces, is the first and fairest. But we must not confine the development of this disposition to members of the Inquisition, or to those who have actually taken men's lives away on account of their religious opinions. In more recent periods of the Church, examples have not been wanting of many who shared the same sentiments as the inquisitor, and probably only lacked the power to inflict the same penalties. We have known such virulence of

language, such bitterness of spirit, and such rancorous animosity expressed against an adversary in the writings of Christian believers—of clergymen, of prelates, and on religious subjects too, and religious points of difference—that we have wondered how they could ever be conceived in the heart, or be expressed by the lips or the pen, of those who professed to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have said that the diversities of disposition and of natures in the four classes or divisions of Christian believers are marked out and typified in the four chief apostles and founders of the Christian Church; but that the character we are now describing, although taking a prominent place in the annals of the Church, has *no* type or parallel amongst the early disciples and followers of Christ mentioned in the New Testament. And it is a remarkable fact, that whilst we have amongst the apostles examples of high intellect, of noble generosity, of overflowing love, of sound practical wisdom; and whilst we have also amongst the apostles an example of the traitorous, worldly, and hypocritical follower of Jesus, we have no example of a severe, intolerant, and unloving apostle. We have certainly a phase or representative of the same condition of mind, as manifested at *one* period, in two of the apostles themselves. But the fact is introduced only to show that this feeling of the apostles' mind met with the *disapproval* of their Master. On a certain occasion, when our Lord was going up to Jerusalem, and when the two disciples, James and John, indignant at the inhabitants of a Samaritan village for refusing to receive Jesus into

their houses, and zealous to show their love and reverence of their Master, proposed to Him—"Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did?" The spirit which they evinced on that occasion was altogether alien from the spirit of a sincere follower of Christ. However deep their attachment to their blessed Master, however just their feeling of the indignity offered to Him, they showed that they were yet ignorant of the true spirit of Jesus and of His truth, in the proposed mode of dealing with His enemies. Hence our Lord's reply: "He turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." It might be in accordance with the spirit of the *law*, but could not for a moment be permitted under the *gospel;* nor, when they came really to know what manner of spirit they were of, did they repeat the offence. The same character, or something nearly resembling it, is depicted as a *fictitious* personage in the elder brother of our Lord's parable of the Prodigal Son. This man was evidently under the influence of much that was good. He was dwelling in his father's house, and could say of his past conduct,—"Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." It was indeed admitted by his indulgent father, who said to him in words of kindness—"Son, *thou* art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." And yet we see the grievous defect which pervaded the feeling of the elder brother—we recognise the hard unbending spirit which refused to receive an erring and repentant brother; nay, which

spoke disrespectfully of a father's indulgence, and refused to share the joy occasioned in the family by the poor penitent prodigal's return. The father's answer was a mild but an unmistakable rebuke of the spirit on which he was acting. Here we say, then, is a case in point. We have in Holy Scripture itself the type of a *character* such as we are now attempting to describe—a character distinguished by a decided declaration of *its own* zeal against all offenders, and by the boast of a steady and continued adherence to the service of God and of His truth, and yet a character marked out for disapproval; not, we are to observe, because the defect lies on some question of *conduct*, but a defect in the essential constitution of the *disposition*—the defect of that spirit of forbearance, of sympathy and kindness towards the brethren, which is so expressly required of every Christian believer in the gospel of our blessed Lord.

In our own Church we have had remarkable examples of this class of character, and of these perhaps the most prominent was Archbishop Laud. It would be quite foreign to the purpose of this work to discuss the character of Laud in its ecclesiastical or political bearings upon our national history, which could not be done without recalling questions of party strife, upon which men will always differ. We have now to deal with the man in his private and personal religious character, as it bears upon the question at present before us. As a man zealous in the cause of religion, he possessed precisely those qualities which we have seen were con-

demned by our Lord. He had no mercy. He had no notion of dealing with fellow-creatures who differed from him, however conscientiously, except by the sternest treatment, and by a severity which could only be due to conduct the most blasphemous and licentious. In fact, he had no idea of allowing anything to difference of opinion. His zeal was unquestionable, but it always seems not so much zeal for religion, as zeal for ecclesiastical conformity. He would have called down fire from heaven, had the power been given to him. He stands in the character of the elder brother, when the question is to pardon. It is a sad picture of one whose zeal for the Church of Christ placed him in a position of such power and prominence. We do not pretend to judge such a character; no doubt he satisfied his own conscience; we would leave him to that divine tribunal which judgeth without passion or partiality: and certainly, if *he* showed no mercy to those who opposed his will, at any rate he *received* none from his enemies when he was in their power. We might name also the learned and energetic Warburton as of this class. The violence shown by Laud in his treatment of Nonconformists, was shown by Warburton in his vehement sarcasms against infidel writers, and indeed against all who published any opinions different from his own. Such violence, evinced even in the cause of religious truth, brings before us the profound and solemn declaration, that the "wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." We shrink from such characters when they appear prominently in the affairs of the Christian Church. We

have no sympathy with religious combatants, of whatever rank, or however able and powerful, who, when they come forward in contest, come in such a spirit that men eagerly watch for their productions as perfect specimens of bitter and sarcastic irony, of withering contempt, and crushing scorn. Such characters are not of the school of Christ; they know not "what manner of spirit they are of."

It is a very serious, and at times a very perplexing, subject for our consideration, how to estimate such characters—we are astonished at the blindness and inconsistency exhibited by those who are so zealous for the upholding and defending the cause of Christian truth as a great system, and who yet, at the same time, so deliberately and systematically offend against its chief and all-pervading precept. Towards such characters we must exercise that charity that hopeth all things, and leave to the decision of a God of Mercy the question of their sincerity and good intentions. An inspired apostle has at any rate given to us all an unmistakable and practical warning against cherishing the dictates of a severe spirit: "He shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy."

No doubt there are differences amongst men in the degrees of certain gifts of the Spirit, and men differ in respect of the quality now under consideration—that is to say, we find one mind more under the *constitutional* tendency to love and gentleness than another. But that circumstance can never excuse the hard judgment and the severe treatment of a fellow-creature. A

man may plead that it is not his fault that he is deficient in the power of intellect and the capacity for abstract argument. He may justly say he is not by nature impulsive or imaginative—that he has done little for Christ in practical usefulness, because he really lacked the means and opportunities. But to be wanting in mercy must be his own fault. To cast away all considerations of pity for others, is to offend *against* the great law of Christian charity,—seems to involve the grieving and resisting the Holy Spirit of God. On this ground, one cannot help thinking that the virulent polemic, who deals with an adversary as with a personal enemy—who would evidently inflict temporal punishment in this world, and delight to denounce eternal damnation in the world to come—*must* willingly and deliberately put aside all consideration of many passages in Holy Scripture which *condemn* such conduct: such, for example, as the precept of St Paul: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Indeed, it seems evident that, according to the clear declarations of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a harsh, unmerciful, and uncharitable demeanour is in principle as much a violation of God's law, as it would be to break the commandments against murder, adultery, and theft. We must, with our own defects and limited knowledge, judge all men charitably; and often, in the cases here referred to, we might apply our Lord's excuse, "They

know not what manner of spirit they are of." Entirely occupied with the letter and the external manifestations of gospel truth, they forget the divine declaration, that "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." But whatever be our speculations regarding the spiritual condition of persons themselves, such as we now describe, or whatever apologies we may make for them individually, there can be no question at all as to the importance of the *lesson* which we ourselves are to learn from their example. We see clearly a character, the defects of which are held up for our warning, and as exhibiting peculiarities which we are to avoid. There is no sanction in Holy Writ for believers assuming such a spirit in the Christian life. Nor can ignorance of the spirit of the gospel be longer offered as an excuse, because it is the duty of every Christian believer to learn what that spirit is, and to follow its mild and holy dictates. I know we shall be answered, that energy, and zeal, and determination in upholding the cause of truth, are fully approved in the Word of God—nay, that Titus was exhorted to "rebuke offenders sharply," and that he should "speak boldly," "and exhort with all authority"—and therefore may be of great value in the spiritual life. We are quite aware that this must be done on due and fit occasions. We are quite ready to admit the value and the praise of an uncompromising champion and defender of the good cause; but still such a one, in his defence of truth, must yet remember mercy. It is a great mistake to suppose that such partisanship, and such zeal, and such decision, may be

separated from the charity that should pervade *every* act of the believer's life. But here we have a decision of St Paul clearly and beautifully laying down the Christian's duty in this very point, as regards his zeal for the good cause, and his feelings towards those whom he has to oppose. We find him thus addressing the Corinthian disciples (1 Cor. xvi. 13, 14): "Watch ye, stand ye fast in the faith; quit you like men, be strong. *Let all your things be done with charity.*" See how he joins the watching, the standing fast for the truth, with Christian charity. In the former of the verses, the Christian is urged to a firm and vigorous conduct, both for supporting the right and for repressing and reproving the wrong; but then follows immediately the general injunction, "Let all your things be done with charity." And the fault, in one word, with those who violate this injunction, who stand fast in the faith, and who do *not* do all their things with charity, is this—their hostility against *error* is extended to the *erring*—the zeal which is directed against the offences which they war against, is sharpened against the *persons* offending. We are to covet earnestly the best gifts, and of these none is more excellent than charity. Those, then, who have the gift of zeal and firmness in defence of the truth, may be assured that the same Holy Spirit who gives that gift, will also, to their prayers, add the gift of charity. Then, whatever path he assume in the defence of God's church and truth, he will ever show mercy and pity to those fellow-Christians with whom he has to contend. He would seek not their destruction, but their welfare; and

when he remembers how liable every human mind is to err, how many different causes and associations are at work in different minds to mislead and to perplex the judgment, he would ever deal leniently with the sinner, though he may be stern against the sin. He would look with compassion on the brother erring from the truth, though uncompromising in condemnation of the error; and knowing how much he himself stands in need of mercy from his God, he shrinks from withholding that mercy from a fellow-creature; and if pity, gentleness, and forgiveness be naturally too much strangers to his breast, he will the more earnestly pray to that blessed Spirit who imparts "diversity of gifts" to all, but denies His influence to none; and thus He may, by the teachings of grace, supply the shortcomings of nature.

CHAPTER III.

THE INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER, AS DEVELOPED IN THE COURSE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE.

THERE can be no doubt of the fact, as already frequently stated—namely, that grace acts upon men's minds, and influences their affections and conduct, by correcting their errors and ennobling their aims and aspirations, without altering the natural and constitutional bias of character—in fact, leaving the impulses and peculiarities of their disposition or temperament, as well as their native abilities and acquirements, in full force, in the spiritual life as in the ordinary life of every Christian believer. We have at some length considered this question in the two foregoing chapters, and have endeavoured to point out some of those religious and practical conclusions which seem to arise out of this appointment of the great Father of the world, taken in its widest and most general aspect. In truth, we have only to look around us and see the fact illustrated by the experience of human life, where we trace precisely the same diversity of disposition as is marked out in the

leading characters of the New Testament. Thus, whilst we find the four great apostles, of whose active apostolic life we have most knowledge, quite distinguishable from each other by their own marked and peculiar characteristics, in them we have, at the same time, the types and representatives of four great classes of believers marked out to us in the Church of Christ—the INTELLECTUAL, the IMPULSIVE, the AFFECTIONATE, and the PRACTICAL; and after what we have already premised, we are now better prepared to consider the details of these four Christian and Scriptural phases of *religious* life; and in this chapter we propose to consider the Intellectual.

Christianity, be it always remembered, is pre-eminently a religion of the intellect. Nor need we be surprised at such an announcement, when we find the gospel scheme which it develops described by an inspired apostle as "the power of God and the *wisdom* of God" unto salvation; and, further, when we are told that its doctrines and revelations contain mysteries into which the angels desire to look. In fact, we find the introduction of Christianity into the world entirely in accordance with this view of its nature and character. Unquestionably it came at first without observation of the learned or the great of the earth. The humblest individuals were its first ministers and preachers. The blessed Author of our holy faith was Himself a poor peasant of Galilee—the reputed son of Joseph the carpenter; and all the early circumstances of His appearance were lowly, poor, and unattractive. But as the

religion of Jesus of Nazareth opened upon the world, it soon assumed its own divine and sublime character. Yes! men soon acknowledged a present Prophet; they saw in His teaching what they now learned to view as the most perfect system of moral conduct—as the most sublime revelation of judgment, of happiness and of misery beyond the grave: these flowed from the lips of Him "who spake as never man spake." It was soon obvious that the gospel could not be *confined* to the lowly scenes of its birth and early growth. Pharisees and men of wealth and learning saw that there was something more than human in the words of this extraordinary Teacher, and that He must have come from God. Trace onwards a little further the history of its introduction, and you find that its first place was in cities. It found its way into the school of the philosopher and the court of the emperor. The wealthy and the high-born became very early members of that band of disciples "first called Christians at Antioch." Indeed, that the Christian faith early fixed itself in the hearts of great towns and cities—that it early gained the intelligent and refined inhabitants of the land—is a fact curiously preserved in the derivation and meaning of the word Pagans. A pagan is simply a dweller in a *pagus* or village; but in the early portions of church history it came to signify one who was not a Christian, because it was amongst the *pagani*, or villagers, that the remnant of those who still adhered to the ancient superstitions and idolatries of heathenism were found. It is a great and important fact in the history of our

most holy faith, that no sooner were its true nature and its profound resources developed to the world, than it overcame its opposition, and was hailed as their religion by the great, the powerful, and the wise; and the fact is important, as showing us the power and divine nature of Christ's gospel under circumstances of human trial and probation. It is essentially the religion of the poor, the uneducated, and the simple; still it is fully capable of exercising the highest intellect and the loftiest talent. The gospel is equally adapted to the uncultivated mind of the peasant, the soaring aspiration of the philosopher, and the sublime musing of the poet. It contains what is suitable for all persons, and for all situations of life. Christ's religion occupies, guides, and directs the cottage, the palace, the lowly school of the ignorant, the speculations of philosophy, the pursuits of the highest seats of learning. The gospel directs the humblest walk of moral and religious duty by lessons which all can understand, and at the same time opens, to the minds of the most intellectual, trains of thought and speculation which lead to the examination of subjects which are infinite and eternal.

Such being the nature of Christ's gospel, and such the materials which it contains, we might expect to find, amongst its earliest exponents, minds capable of delivering its loftiest as well as its plainest truths. The Church *required* an apostle whose powers of mind should present gospel truth to the men of intellect who might become inquirers and believers. We are now entitled to urge the inner and spiritual life upon minds of the

highest order. St Paul is manifestly, and beyond all question, the type and representative of this class of Christian disciples—the disciple and apostle of great intellectual and reasoning powers. We are far from meaning that his character was deficient in other graces of Christian endowment. His mind was thoroughly practical as well as speculative; his heart was tender, his disposition affectionate; the love of Christ and of the brethren constrained him. We cannot fail to discern this love and tenderness as we read the affecting account of his parting from the elders of Ephesus—of his parting, with the embraces and the tears of those to whom his pastoral fidelity and spiritual care had made him so dear and valued. We discover the same disposition in his earnest and intense expressions of love and interest for the spiritual conversion of his countrymen, who hated him and persecuted him. But still he is eminently, amongst the apostles, the type of the intellectual believer. He always grapples with the philosophy of the questions he discusses; and, in fact, it is one proof of the superiority of his intellect, that in his large and glorious mind *all* gifts and all graces of the present earthly condition are made conducive to the advancement of Christ's spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men. God in wisdom adapted all the arrangements of His church for the full development of gospel truth, and the application of the faith to the special wants and requirements of mankind; and thus, whilst Matthew was called from the receipt of customs, and Peter and James from the fishing-nets, and other apostles from

other humble stations and occupations, Paul was converted from the school of the Pharisees—Paul, who had sat at the feet of Gamaliel—Paul, a citizen of Rome, versed in the literature of Rome, profound in the lore of the Rabbis, and an accomplished scholar in all traditions of the Jewish fathers. His style of writing corresponds with this representation of his habits and character previous to his conversion. In two profound and reasoning treatises on Christian faith, the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, he fully sustains the reputation of the school in which he had been trained. It fell to the lot of this great apostle to *christianise* philosophy.

There is another apostle whom we should be disposed to place in this class of intellectual disciples. We have no writing of his—in fact, we have little more than one incident of his life: I mean St Thomas. Some persons may not be prepared to hear St Thomas referred to as belonging particularly to the *reasoning* or intellectual class of characters; but from the brief notices of his history and disposition recorded in the Gospels, we should judge him to be of this type. When told of Jesus having risen from the grave, and having appeared to some of the disciples, he certainly doubted—at least, he withheld his full belief—and positively declared, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." We cannot praise the spirit in which these words were spoken; but we do not think they were said in a sceptical or

unbelieving spirit, as of one unwilling to confide in Jesus, or careless of seeing Him again. His history shows this was far from being his nature. He had, on the other hand, a true and devoted love to his divine Master, for when the disciples on one occasion were to accompany Him to Bethany, the dwelling-place of Lazarus and his sisters, the nature of Thomas's feelings was conveyed in the determination, "Let us go, that we may die with Him!" His was a mind which must be satisfied with sufficient evidence. He did not fall into his belief by impulse, but on reflection. His *reason* must be convinced. It was an honest, accurate, unimaginative mind; for although he would not say that he believed till he had proof, still when the time came that he *had* the proof—when Jesus graciously showed him the wounds of His hands and feet, and of His pierced side—then he believed with all his heart. He gave himself up to the conviction. He earnestly and ardently exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!"

But let us return to St Paul, who is eminently distinguished as the intellectual or reasoning member of the apostolic college. He brings the energies of a powerful and accomplished mind to bear upon the great questions of Christian faith and practice. He is never superficial. He never shrinks from the task of fathoming all the depths of his subject. The reasoning faculty is ever active and in employment. Thus, when expounding the great doctrine of an atonement and satisfaction for sin, he goes at once to the bottom of the question, and brings forward, as the foundation of the whole

scheme, the moral ruin and corruption of the race, both in Jew and Gentile; and he triumphantly shows that, as by his own merits man never *can* be justified and accepted, if he is to be justified and accepted at all it must be by a merit not his own, and by an offering such as *he* could never make. He boldly asserts the power and universal empire of God, and vindicates the Divine right to govern the world, and to choose His own agents, and bestow His gifts of grace and providence according to His own will; and when such reasoning brings him in direct contact with the dark and mysterious questions of predestination by the eternal Mind, and the free will of those who are in a trial and probationary condition, he fairly grapples with the question, and writes as one who had well considered its difficulties, and was not afraid to meet them, knowing both the power, the wisdom, the justice, and the love of God to be secure. In the true spirit of the highest tone of philosophic argument, he boldly and broadly states the most profound and abstract truths of God's moral character, regardless of the cavils or the objections which men of little minds may offer to his statements. In like manner, when discussing the great doctrine of the Resurrection, how sublime and masterly is the style in which he lays it before his disciples! He meets the objector who asks, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" and he meets the question in the only way in which a man of enlarged mind and powerful intellect could meet it. He brings forward the analogy of nature. In the most clear

and convincing manner he argues in favour of the conclusion supplied by analogy drawn from the vegetable world, in which a beautiful or useful tree or plant arises from a mere seed sown in the earth. The corruptible *body* forms, in this case, a seed from which there will spring a new and incorruptible being; and he sums up the sublime discourse by a vivid representation of the time when the "corruptible shall put on incorruption, and the mortal put on immortality." Thus we always find, throughout St Paul's exposition of Christian truth, his lessons all partaking of the nature of his own prevailing bent of mind; and without delaying to adduce more examples, this will suggest to us some considerations, and will open views of the gospel of Christ, which are eminently interesting and practical in their application to men's reception of that gospel.

I. And, first, we see strong evidence of the divine power of Christ's gospel, as it exercises an influence on the hearts and minds of men in forming them to the spiritual life. It is calculated to draw forth all the resources and faculties of our nature, and possesses all necessary elements for sounding the lowest depths, and mastering the highest elevations of that nature. It is at once an intellectual and a practical religion, sublime and simple, elevating and humbling. No man can despise the doctrines of the Bible, or put aside the religious life as something suited only for the simple, the uneducated, and unreasoning. No! when such minds as Newton, Locke, and Bacon have been disciples and learners in the school of Christ's gospel, we need not

fear to allow full scope to all the faculties *we* possess; nor suppose that because Christianity speaks to the poor and lowly, it is unfitted for minds that are cultivated and refined.

Now, exactly such a character as St Paul was required amongst the apostles to sustain the minds of men who *reason* on the subject of religion. There is no flinching from argument—men are invited to "prove all things," and then to "hold fast that which is good;" in other words, to examine and to discriminate—to compare spiritual things with spiritual—to compare spiritual questions according to the analogy of natural questions; and it is quite evident that in all this there is full scope for the mental and reasoning powers. But, generally speaking, men have not in themselves such powers, and must therefore follow the teaching of those who have. And here we discern the value and importance of that gift which was imparted to St Paul, and to others, uninspired writers, in the Church. They have *proved* those questions, and met the hostile arguments of the sceptic and the infidel. And thus, whilst we have some who teach us how to pray and how to offer devotion before the Majesty on high, and whilst others expound the great doctrines of the gospel, and teach us what is the right faith, so there are others who prove the truth of Christianity by argument, when argument is needed. It is impossible to deny that amongst the opponents of Christianity have been men of acute minds and great ingenuity in argument. Such men as Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Hume, and Gibbon were not to be put down

without skill and ability commensurate with their own. Hence we gratefully acknowledge the power by which they have been met by Christian believers. The men of intellect in the Church have triumphed in the fair field of argumentation, and have been able to show that the faith of the Christian is not a "cunningly-devised fable," but is in accordance with human reason—that, in fact, the gospel of Christ is the perfection of human reason.

II. Then another consideration arises out of this appointment,—the intellectual element forming an essential feature of the Christian character,—and that is, the proper exercise and due *regulation* of human reason in matters of religion. It is quite evident that men may be led into error by an improper use of the gift of reasoning, and they may set up intellect as an idol, and make it independent of revelation; for thus it is that men have been wise above what is written, and thus the declarations of Holy Scripture have been made subservient to human judgment, and a spirit of infidelity has raised itself against the revealed word of God, which threatens to subvert the truth as it is in Jesus, and which contaminates the minds both of the learned and the ignorant, which vitiates the belief of the scholar and the artisan. This is one of the worst moral symptoms of the times, and men have to learn that nothing is more dangerous to their present peace and future happiness, than listening to the words of those who set up human argument and human speculation against the distinct and plain declarations of Holy Writ. Now, every variety

of character, and every peculiarity of disposition, requires its own special warning and instruction. Men of high intellectual power, and men of ordinary capacity, alike stand in need of being reminded that the possession of such gifts, or the *absence* of such gifts, are alike given or withheld under the dispensation of the Word of God; and whether we have mental acquirements, or have them not, the question always is, What can we do, in our own sphere and Christian life, to promote God's glory, and our own fitness for the kingdom of heaven? As, therefore, particular cautions are suited to particular cases of different natural qualities of mind affecting the religious life, we may now endeavour to explain the caution suited to *this* branch of it especially.

1. In the first place, then, it is not impossible that persons may suppose themselves to belong to the intellectual class of character without sufficient ground. This is, according to the apostle's language, "to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think." It must lead to many fatal errors; and no ignorance is more dangerous than that ignorance of a man's own powers which makes him "wise in his own conceit." It is subversive of true Christian humility, and has the injurious effect of leading men into opinions and undertakings for which they are unfit, and in which they are sure to fail. It is from this class that we have examples of the most daring and most offensive expressions of unbelief—of that rash and licentious spirit of judging which brings misery and disgrace to all within its sphere.

2. Then, again, men may be truly gifted in intellectual capacity, and yet act upon principles inconsistent with the spirit and the humility of the lowly Jesus. Oh, it is the saddest picture of man's ingratitude and moral depravity, when the gifts of genius and of mental power are abused to purposes of dishonouring the cause of divine truth, and of Christian moral purity of conduct. Let all who are conscious of talent remember it is a gift of God—a talent intrusted to them, and for which an account must be rendered at the great day of reckoning. If intellect be without God and God's guidance, it becomes a curse, and not a blessing. Men have boasted of a philosophy, which made them despise Revelation. It is not thus that St Paul used his faculties in discussing and expounding the gospel of Jesus Christ. He always professes to be a *learner* in the school of Christ. He never dogmatises. He always maintains that the foolishness of God is wiser than men. He is always anxious to remind his disciples that he never wished to make them believers by the power of his own argument or by force of his own reason—that he wished their faith not to stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God; and so did all who, like him, have been distinguished in the Church as able and learned expositors of Christian truth. They have trained their faculties to follow Christ's teaching, not to usurp its place. The wisest have shown the greatest humility. Up to what is written, they have sought to fathom the deep things of God; but in points *beyond* what is written, or on matters where Revelation has made *no* announcement, they walk with

caution, and decide nothing. The real cause of this is manifest—viz., that as no power of human intellect could have devised the mighty scheme of man's redemption, so no human intellect can go beyond what has been revealed. We may follow the steps of the inspired writers in what they have discovered, but cannot pass the line which they have preserved. And it is according to this principle that the wisest and the ablest in the Christian Church have exercised their faculties, and employed their talents, in the cause of Christ's gospel. When they found that God had given them intellect as a spiritual gift, their first desire was to dedicate it to Him —to exercise the gift so that it should promote His glory and the salvation of mankind.

I have said that, of the inspired writers, St Paul is distinguished by the gift of intellect and power of reasoning; and, amongst the writers of our own Church, I would say that Richard Hooker takes the corresponding prominent position as a teacher of Christian truth. In his great work on the principles of divine law and ecclesiastical polity, he takes the deepest views on matters of faith, and brings every question which he discusses to the test of sound reason, and argues it out on the great principles of God's universal empire. There is a breadth and grandeur in his treatment of all subjects, which mark him, as an uninspired writer, to be of the same class with the great apostle of the Gentiles. Whilst we follow his teaching, we shall find a strength and elevation of sentiment growing up in our minds, whilst at the same time we shall find reason completely subor-

dinate to Revelation; and the pages of Hooker offer a noble testimony to the accordance in all Christian subjects of the most profound understanding, with the singleness and simplicity of childhood. There are many writers of our Church who might be named as belonging to this class of God's servants, to whom intellect has been given, and has been used under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit. We might name especially Butler, whose immortal work, the *Analogy*, is perhaps the most precious offering of human sagacity in the cause of Christian truth. The mind of South, as a Christian divine, may be ranked in this class. Horsley, too, brings a luminous and acute intellect to bear upon the question he discusses. But in all and each, what we have especially to notice is, the same deference to divine authority. We shall find that they are the expositors, not the judges or critics, of Revelation. In all they write we shall find the same purpose of using the analogy of God's government in providence and nature as the guide and rule for interpreting the divine purposes in the concerns of grace. Their works offer a wholesome spiritual exercise, and it is fitting for every one, however humble, to know something of this class of Christian writers.

III. From all that we have said, therefore, on this wide and important subject, we shall have abundant materials applicable to our own case, and our own guidance and direction for the Christian life, in the use of whatever faculty of reason God may have given us. It should prevent self-conceit, and that overweening and

rash trusting to man's own wisdom, which is the height of human folly. In different minds different faculties prevail or predominate; and for each case, no doubt, a special caution is required. In some minds, accordingly, we find prevailing the exercise of reason and argument. It is not a question whether the intellectual faculty be in itself powerful and commanding; but the question is of cases where reason and argument are tending to *predominate* over other faculties of the same mind. Some minds, whether competent or incompetent, are always disposed to bring everything submitted to them, even the most sacred truths of our Christian faith, to the test of their reason. They undervalue the feelings and affections on which others depend for almost all their opinions. Whosoever feels that such is the bias of his mind in religious questions, he should go to the great luminaries of the Church to learn a lowly estimate of his own powers, and to use such powers and gifts as God has given him for the service of true religion and virtue. Intellect without humility, and without love and fear of God, forms a most odious and unchristian moral character. See it as displayed in fallen angels, and in Satan, the great tempter of mankind, especially. Being an angel, he had the gift of high intellect and great knowledge; but, as a *fallen* angel, he had no love, no zeal for God, no hatred of evil; and hence the misery and woe which he brought into the world. And so it always will be. We may reason, but we dare not push the conclusions of reason beyond the declarations of Scripture. As I have said, we must "prove all things,"

and in order to do this we must avail ourselves of the writings which examine theological questions in a spirit of argument and of proof; but then we are to hold fast that which we have ascertained to be *good*, we must hold it fast by the ties of affection—by love and gratitude, and not by any continued process of reasoning. The highest Christian characters, the humble, lowly, Christian walk, are not formed by argument, but by faith—the faith which *worketh* by love, and which speaks of its belief in this fashion: "I believe, because I now *feel* the gospel to be true: my heart receives Christ as matter of spiritual experience and love: I have a conviction of the truth of Christ's gospel which no *arguments* could give me: my affections ascend above my reason, and I am nearer to God when I pray than when I argue." To show the degradation and the delusion of separating intellect from faith, we have only to point to the wretched infidel publications of the present day—some of British origin, some translations from the German. Let none who value their peace of mind seek acquaintance with such writings, for no good can come of acquaintance with them. They afford a melancholy example of the evil and the danger of setting up reason in opposition to Revelation; and, therefore, the conclusion we draw from all that has been advanced, is this: Like all the gifts of God, both in grace and providence, the intellectual temperament is a good or an evil to us exactly according to the USE we make of it. A time is fast approaching when the great truths of our holy faith are to be realised, not by argument, but by sight. When

we are all summoned before the judgment-seat of Christ, think of how little avail will be the cavils and the speculations of human reason. The question, then, to be proposed to every individual present, may be thus stated: "Have you been *arguing* about the gospel, or have you been doing its commands? Have you been disputing where you ought to have adored?"

How terribly applicable, how dreadful, will sound the words of the apostle at the day of final reckoning, "Where is now the disputer of this world?" Then indeed we shall find in that day, "God has made *foolish* the wisdom of this world."

CHAPTER IV.

THE IMPULSIVE CHARACTER, EXHIBITED IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

WE propose to consider in this chapter another phase or variety of natural disposition and its action in the Christian life—and that is, the Impulsive or Imaginative. There may, of course, along with this temperament, be more or less of the gift of reason and of intellect; but then usually in such characters we find, in particular cases of action, that there is not *time* for the exercise of reason. Questions being viewed through the medium of the fancy or the imagination, the decisions are formed on the instant—the conclusion is settled, and the step is taken without consideration. It may be right, or it may be a fatal error—it may be a decision of which the consequences will conduce to happiness, or a decision of which the consequences are to be vexation and sorrow. Nor is there any reason in the nature of things why such a disposition may not be conjoined with the highest Christian graces and virtues. There is nothing necessarily sinful in an ardent, impulsive nature; only, being

a nature prone to rash and heedless conduct, it must be watched and guarded that its peculiarities may be rightly directed in the conduct of the inner or spiritual life. It requires to be tempered by caution, and warned against the effects of its own impetuosity. It may be that the impulsive disposition more frequently acts on what is a good nature than on what is in itself an evil one. Indeed, from this class of believers in the Church we find some of the most engaging and the most devoted religious characters. We find Christians prompt to succour and to relieve distress, — ready for any good work, without the selfish estimate of the cost. Amongst these we find the warm and genuine appreciation of noble sentiments and devoted conduct. In this class we find the generous and unshrinking defender of the oppressed,—the indignant scorner of everything mean and cowardly and unjust.

When we look to the apostles and early disciples of our Lord, we find one, and he a very distinguished one, whose character stands out from his brother apostles in the most prominent relief, as marked by this very quality of which we are now to treat. I need scarcely add that I refer to the character of St Peter. Peter was eminently impulsive. The whole evangelical history is marked by instances of this peculiarity; and we shall find, therefore, in him, not only a marked character in the apostolic band, but the precise type and form of a numerous class of believers in the Christian Church. The minds of such persons are prone to quick impulses—they act upon the spur of the moment. They do not calculate consequen-

ces. Review the chief events of the Saviour's life, and you will mark this peculiarity in the conduct of St Peter. He it is who comes prominently forward on every occasion. He is always ready with his tongue, and is always the most active on every occasion when anything is to be *done*. It seems as if he could not rest quiet, but must give vent to his feelings. On going through the evangelical history, we find him mentioned fourteen times as voluntary spokesman for the occasion. Remark some of these particulars. Very early in the evangelical history, and almost immediately upon the call of Peter to be an apostle, when Jesus had given proof of His divine power by the miraculous draught of fishes, Peter came forward to do homage to the Lord. All were astonished at the amazing draught, but Peter, when he saw it, felt more keenly the presence of Deity in human form, for he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." When the Lord Jesus asked His disciples what the world thought of His mission and His office, "Whom do men say that I am?" they answered generally that some said He was John the Baptist; some, Elias; and some, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. But when Jesus put the question home to themselves, and asked them, "But whom say *ye* that I am?" the zeal of Peter burst forth in the noble declaration—felt, no doubt, by all the disciples, but first expressed by him—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." On another memorable occasion, when Jesus was predicting the approaching sufferings and the desertion of all His friends, He told the apostles that

they too should be offended because of Him and of His cause that night, and that they too should desert Him. They did not reply as a body to this accusation. They were doubtful—they hung their heads and had their misgivings; they might have been mistrustful of themselves and were afraid to speak. But Peter *could not* keep silence; his ardent feelings for his Lord, and his burning indignation at the supposed failure of *his* courage in the day of trial, poured forth the declaration, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." And still further, when Jesus more especially reported the time of his defection, he then passionately exclaimed, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee;" and, encouraged by such zealous protestations, the other disciples then made a like declaration. On one occasion, when Jesus was explaining to His disciples the wrongs and indignities which awaited Him on His going up to Jerusalem—that He should suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day—the spirit of the ardent apostle was excited by the narrative, and at once, and without consultation with his brethren, he expressed to his Lord an indignant feeling at the idea of His being subjected to such treatment. The evangelist records that he took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee." On another occasion, when the disciples witnessed the amazing spectacle of Jesus walking on the sea, and were troubled, saying, "It is a spirit," and cried out for fear, and when Jesus had assured them of His

identity, and of there being no occasion for alarm, the impulsive disposition of Peter urged him to show personal sympathy with his Lord and Master. He was keen to share the same honour, and to be with Jesus. He therefore it was of the amazed disciples that said, "If it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water." Indeed, on one occasion his zeal to be forward in his proffered services led him to speak without exactly having a clear conception of what was to be done; for the sacred evangelist, after recording Peter's address to his Master, adds, "not knowing what he said." These instances, taken from the sacred history, are quite sufficient to show us the impulsive and ardent character of St Peter. They mark out his generous and warm-hearted disposition towards his Lord and Master, but at the same time they bring out the weakness of his character, or rather the want of careful preparation and firm resolution to carry forward and to support the pretensions somewhat rashly and inconsiderately put forward under the first impulse. In three instances, the zeal and determination expressed by the apostle failed in sustaining a corresponding result. After he had declared in such strong terms his attachment to his Master, and his firm resolve to be steadfast till death in His service amid the defection of others, he fell from his profession, and with an oath denied even that he "*knew* the man" to whom he had so lately vowed to be faithful unto death. On the occasion when he took upon him to rebuke his Lord for the mention he had made of His approaching sufferings and death at Jerusalem, he drew upon himself the stern

reply for his rash and inconsiderate language, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." On the occasion when he would have joined his Master walking on the sea, no sooner had he put forth his foot to tread the wave, than, alarmed at the effect of the wind upon the water, he began to sink. He appealed to Jesus, and cried out, "Lord, save me!" who put forth His hand and caught him to sustain him, but added the just rebuke, "Oh thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Clearly, in all these cases, the apostle acted under an impulse, and a generous impulse; but he had not fully prepared his mind for the position which, inconsiderately, he had assumed. And the remarkable distinctness with which St Peter's peculiar disposition stands out, shows beyond all question that the work of grace does not change or cancel the tendencies and impulses of man's nature. Such persons as those now described form a common case in the Church and in society. They are characters of fine materials, of noble feelings, of generous impulse. But when imagination predominates, and takes the place of reason, it is soon apparent that imagination is unequal to contend with the enemies of man's soul. How distinctly does St Peter stand distinguished from his fellow-apostles as the type of this class of Christian character! He had all the impetuosity of the ardent temperament; and therefore, whilst he is the apostle whose professions are most ready, he is also the apostle of whom failure in the hour of trial is most frequently recorded. Of distinguished

names in our own Church, we should say that the character which has most resemblance to the impulsive Peter is Bishop Jeremy Taylor. No writer in theology brings forward more effectively the influence of fancy and imagination. He has for this reason been termed the Shakespeare of divines. There is a glow and radiance cast over all he writes—an eagerness of manner, and intensity of purpose, which mark his readiness in his Master's cause. Like Peter, his fancy seizes upon the immediate question, and blinds him to the more remote consequences. Hence an occasional inconsistency of opinion, and an impassioned exposition of the truth before him, which may sometimes require to be much modified when some truth of a different character comes to be considered. An impulsive and ardent temperament made the apostle's *conduct* uncertain, just as a lively imagination produced the same results in the theological *teaching* of the Bishop. In this way we trace a strong resemblance of character. Their faults, their bright and generous natures, are closely allied. In the masterly summing up of Taylor's character by Bishop Heber, as developed in his writings, we discern many traits which belong to Peter in his conduct as a Christian disciple. "His own understanding was rather inventive than critical. He never failed to find a plausible argument for any opinion which he himself entertained; he was as ready with plausible objections to every argument which might be advanced by his adversaries. His own views were sometimes indistinct, and often hasty. His opinions, therefore, though always honest and ardent, he

had sometimes occasion in the course of his life to change; and instances may be pointed out, not only where his reasoning is inconclusive, but where positions, ardently maintained in some of his writings, are doubted or denied in others. . . . Occasionally he will be found to contradict and repeat himself."* The faults of Jeremy Taylor as a writer are, in fact, just the faults of Peter in his earlier days as a man of action. We should observe, however, that the parallel does not hold with the *writings* of the apostle, because, when he prepared his epistles, he had by tears of bitter experience corrected the chief weakness of his character, and learned caution and humility.

Having now, we believe, sufficiently explained the character of mind and disposition represented by the apostle Peter, we have next to consider the application of the question to our own Christian experience, and to consider how a temperament such as that which we have attempted to describe should be viewed as affecting the spiritual life, and as forming an element in the Christian character. For this purpose, perhaps it may be practically expedient to make a division of our remarks upon this class of character, as addressed, first, to those who do *not* come under this description; and, second, to those who partake more or less of the imaginative or impulsive temperament. Excellent characters, and really sincere religious characters, are found under *both* denominations. Each has its own particular faults and errors. Both have to forbear with each other, and to learn from each other.

* HEBER'S *Jeremy Taylor*, vol. i. p. 302.

I. To consider, then, the first:—There are many characters whom we meet with in human life quite different from the disposition we are now describing, and not at all belonging to the class of which St Peter is so remarkably the type and representative. They have no impulses; of a cautious, cold, and unimpressive temperament, you cannot expect ever to see them carried away under the influence of imagination; they take up no questions, follow no objects, with ardour and enthusiasm. In a religious point of view, such persons may be very persevering, very devoted, and very faithful. The outward demeanour may be cold, and seem to be indifferent; whilst within there may be a determined resolution to serve God, and an heroic energy which would brave persecution and suffering and death for Christ's sake and for His truth. The other disciples of our Lord may have felt as much as Peter, though they said less, and more frequently kept back their feelings. There may certainly be a danger that, in such persons of unimpulsive nature and calm disposition, they should fall into the spirit of apathy and indifference. There is a danger of such persons acting only from motives of fear, or interest, or policy, and of losing sight of all generous emotions, and the warmer impulses of love and admiration. But observe, also, that perhaps another caution is necessary in the case of such cold characters as those we are now considering. Their want of ardour may not arise from want of feeling, so much as from want of knowledge and consideration. They have not closely followed the steps of the divine Saviour.

They do not *know* Jesus Christ. They have not sufficiently meditated upon that love of Christ which passeth knowledge; and hence they are unmoved at mysteries into which angels desire to look, and they regard with comparative apathy questions belonging to their eternal condition of happiness or misery; and this simply because they have not laid the matter to heart. When pursuing the Christian life, how carefully should we study the records of redeeming love, and how earnestly should we contemplate all that Jesus has done and suffered to bring us to God! Much of the indifference which is manifest on the subject of personal religion may no doubt arise from the natural temperament being cold and unimpressive. But the same defect even in the coldest may also spring from want of reflection and of earnest contemplation of the great facts and doctrines of the gospel. The more frequently and the more intently we are conversant with religious truths, the more we may expect the aid of God's Holy Spirit, to impart His gift of "comfort, life, and fire of love." A careful exercise of the understanding and reflective powers may often supply the want of a lively imagination. We may easily conceive the case of a Christan believer who cannot follow the flights of a fanciful religious creed, who has no taste for speculation on the invisible mysteries of his faith; and yet who, by long study of the question, shall become as earnest and as zealous in his Master's cause as if he were the most excited and impassioned enthusiast. One advice we would venture to offer to those who possess the cooler judgment and the more composed

discrimination:—Not to ridicule or condemn the less sober views of questions which may be adopted by sanguine or imaginative characters. There is too little real earnestness in the world that we should discourage it, even when it may lack some judgment. Advise and restrain the excited and over-zealous combatants in the good cause, but do not put them down with a sneer or a sarcasm. So long as positive error is avoided, fanaticism itself is better than apathy. Enthusiasm may be subdued into wholesome energy. Indifference can hardly be raised to *any* good ends. No doubt it is better for the Church to have the surface occasionally disturbed, even by indiscreet zeal, than to remain torpid from generation to generation. When the pool of Bethesda was *ruffled*, it was by an angel stepping down to agitate the waters and to cure disease.

II. But now a few words of practical application to those who form the real type of this class—the impulsive or imaginative character. To those who feel themselves of this description, we would add a word of caution and of encouragement in pursuing the Christian life—we say *caution*, because all persons acting under impulse or emotion require to be cautious. No one under strong excitement, although excited in a good cause, and towards right issues, can quite fairly and justly estimate what should be done under certain circumstances. There is a danger of rash and hasty conclusions. The fancy and imagination will clothe objects under their influence with a deceitful appearance, and give them a false estimate. It is the office of a calm reflection and a sober

discretion to give the right estimate, and *then*, if reason corroborates the first impression, you may fairly go forward, and direct the impulses aright and to right ends. Zeal without knowledge is a doubtful ally for religious purposes; zeal *with* knowledge is a good servant of Christ; for, as the apostle intimates (Gal. iv. 18), "it is good to be zealously affected in a good thing."

It is not, remember, a subject for blame that men should be keen or enthusiastic in their feelings upon religious questions, or that they are quick and ready to express their determination for action,—men's natural temperament will lead to this; but the blame is, that men should allow this feeling to be evanescent,—that they should make an energetic and zealous commencement from which they *decline*, and about which they become indifferent whenever the first ardour of excitement and of feeling has passed away. No one could do otherwise than love the generous burst of emotion that came from Peter's lips, more ready and more sanguine than his companions: "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." But after so warm a profession, his falling away was even more culpable than the desertion of the others. Perseverance, then, should be the motto of persons of this disposition, —steadfast religious perseverance in what has been eagerly begun; perseverance in everything where mature reflection has confirmed the first determination, as being for a good object. There is no reason why firm resolve and patient perseverance should not accompany and follow the ebullitions and the conclusions of a nature

ardent and imaginative. These, in fact, are the finest manifestation of human character, these form the real friends of humanity, the true philanthropists; of this temperament, even to the extent of incurring the charge of enthusiasm by their contemporaries, were the Howards, the Wilberforces, and the Chalmerses, enrolled in our country's annals as its most distinguished benefactors. In most cases, perhaps, the practical deficiency in the doings of such characters as those which we describe, is in the medium through which they view the questions whereon they have to decide. Their determination is more a hasty ebullition of feeling than a calm conclusion arising out of a fixed principle. The result is, that when the fancy has passed away, there is not sufficient moral and religious principle left to support the conduct. Many persons of this class, for example, are keen and ardent in the good work of Christian charity and benevolence, so long as there hang around it the halo of romance, and the attraction of a morbid sentimentalism. But when the cold and unexciting reality of human life, with all its homely wants and severe trials, comes to be dealt with, zeal evaporates, and the interest and the exertions die away. We may trace this defect and this failure in the sad shortcoming of the apostle. Peter spoke out of the enthusiasm of the moment, under the sentiment excited by his beloved Master being in danger; he fired at the thought how base and ungenerous it would be to desert Him at such an hour. His determination was rather a generous impulse than a deep sense of the obligation that he had incurred to be faithful to the

cause in which he was engaged. He felt for his Master personally, but did not sufficiently estimate the *duty* that lay upon him to bear persecution, and to brave the anger of the world. The impulse, generous as it was, did not carry him through. He fell because he had not counted the cost; but he went out and wept bitterly over his fall, and he was from that day a better and a firmer character. Thus we find the defects and failings which arose in the character of this apostle corrected by the searchings of repentance and the agonies of remorse; and so we shall always find it, when guided by the grace of God, and strengthened by the aids of His Holy Spirit. The ardour and the impulses of nature are then directed to fine issues. But remember that, in carrying out the details of the spiritual life, it is a character which requires discipline. It requires *peculiar* discipline. It requires occasionally a check and precautionary admonition. Still there is no doubt, as has been said, that in such characters, of which the apostle Peter is the type and representative, there have been found some of the finest material in the Christian Church,—generous emotion and daring contempt of danger and of persecution, joined with keen and devoted attachment to the person and the cause of our blessed Lord. It forms, as we may say, a hopeful foundation, a valuable commencement of character. Thus we look for a more impulsive disposition in the early days of life than in its more mature years. A too calculating spirit seems ungraceful and almost unnatural in youth, when we look for more generous, and even romantic views of

life; whilst in age we expect to see a more calm deliberation of the judgment, as chastened by disappointment and corrected by experience. In this manner we look for the happiest results of a disposition ardent and energetic in its manifestations of zeal, when those manifestations are called forth in the cause of Christ and of His gospel. We augur well of a character full of generous impulses and keen pursuit of its favourite objects; but it is when the character has been improved by reflection, and trained by discipline and by suffering. Take St Peter's own character. How beautifully it comes forth out of his trials and disasters! He seems to arrive at truth by going through a series of errors. His impetuosity leads him to positions where he can meditate, and gather strength and wisdom from the past. After his great fall and lamentable weakness, he "went out and wept bitterly." He returned to greet his risen Lord a wiser, a more guarded, and a *better* man. We discern the effects of his discipline and trial, from his intercourse with Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. Jesus asked him if he loved Him now more than his brother disciples did. Peter, unlike himself, avoids all asseveration of his own attachment and his own devotedness—he simply appeals to the knowledge of him which lay hidden in the Redeemer's own heart,—"Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee!" And when desirous of impressing on his disciples the same lesson *he* himself had learned by severe and mortifying experience, he writes to them, "Be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." Peter had

shrunk from acknowledging Jesus; he dreaded being considered a disciple; he declared with an oath he knew not the man. But he lived to show the boldness of a *true* disciple, and, when charged not to speak more in the name of Jesus, to say to the persecutor, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Once only after his Lord's resurrection a lingering weakness marked the natural disposition of this apostle, and St Paul accuses him of dissembling to conciliate the Jews.* But he nobly retrieved his error, and rose above the weakness of his character. He who had once feared danger in the service of Christ, lived to meet death with supreme courage, and to choose a death more painful and humiliating than ordinary crucifixion—for he expired, as we read in church history, with his head downwards—and his latest testimony, his dying declaration, was, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee!" It is thus that we may learn to apply all the faculties of our nature. Thus we may strengthen what is defective, and direct into good channels all that is capable of doing God service.

* Gal. ii. 11-13.

CHAPTER V.

THE AFFECTIONATE DISPOSITION MANIFESTED IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

OF all our Lord's apostles and disciples, no character, perhaps, is so marked and distinct as St John's. Others have their peculiarities and special qualities strongly developed, which we trace through different acts of their lives; but in St John there is one quality of which we never lose sight, and that is the quality of LOVE. He is eminently, therefore, the type and representative of that section of the Christian Church where the *affections* are dominant. He leads the band of Christian disciples who view all Christian doctrines and Christian duties through the medium of the feelings. Not only does he bear the impress of the disposition with which his name is associated, in his own person and demeanour, being on that account the disciple most closely in accordance with the Redeemer's own character, and therefore distinguished by the remarkable appellation, "The disciple whom Jesus loved," but this quality seems to form the key and the exposition of his whole system of *teaching*.

With St John we find such statements as these: "Love is the fulfilling of the law;" "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God;" "Love is of God." Now, to express more fully the doctrine which he upholds, he identifies the very essence of Deity with the attribute by which he is most distinguished, for in describing the Godhead he declares "God *is* love." There is something peculiarly engaging in the character of St John. We picture to ourselves a *young* apostle amongst the others, men of middle age or advanced years. We see him placed next to the Redeemer's own person at supper. We think of him as the disciple distinguished through all ages of the church by the endearing appellation, "The disciple whom Jesus *loved*." In the first place, then, we view the lovable and lovely qualities of St John as a natural inheritance. Independent of the grace of virtue learned in the school of Christ, he had as much bias or tendency to gentle faculties as the corrupted condition of humanity admits of; and in considering—what, indeed, is the chief purport of these remarks—the influence of religion upon men of different natural temperament and disposition, we can hardly fail to notice, that in nothing do men vary more from each other than in the quality of a loving and gentle nature. With some it is a part of themselves. They cannot change. Everything is viewed through the one medium. Where they meet with fellow-creatures in distress or sorrow, their first *impulse* is to pity and relieve. Nothing makes them so miserable as to witness human suffering; and when they encounter guilt, and are brought

In contact with weakness and misconduct, they are ever prone to pity and forgive. They judge leniently, and would always act kindly. If compelled to condemn or punish, it is with reluctance, and at the cost of much pain and distress to themselves. The hearts of such men are scarcely *capable* of bitter and hard feelings. They earnestly crave for sympathy from others, and feel miserable unless they find an object for their attachment and regard. Now, of this description of character, beyond all doubt, St John is the type and representative. With him the principle of love is the ruling sentiment, and may be said to influence his whole character and writings as an evangelist and a Christian divine. His gospel is pervaded by a tender sensibility which eminently marks every passage, distinguishing it from all the preceding gospels. And in his Epistles love is made to develop all Christian doctrine, and to give life and animation to all Christian emotions. To St John, therefore, we are specially directed in our analysis and development of the Christian believer's character and duties, where an affectionate disposition and warm feelings form the prominent and leading distinctions; and it is important that we *should* have such a type and model, whereby we may judge of its proper qualities, adjust its due proportions, and adapt its energies to consummating the Christian life and character. We say this because there can be no donbt that the character which we are now describing, with much that is charming, fair, and lovely, may have its corresponding drawbacks and defects. There may be want of firmness and of determi-

nation where evil conduct and evil principles are concerned. In this world we have to deal with much that is evil. We have to exercise, therefore, the mixed qualities of mercy and of justice. We have to deal with the bad and with the good, for both are permitted by God to grow together in the earth for the present, till the harvest at the end of the world. The character based on affection may therefore be wanting in this: it may compromise the truth, and fail to sustain the just disapproval of evil,—may be too lenient in dealing with cases of obstinate misconduct, of unbelief, and determined impenitence. But in St John we find an example and illustration of all that we require. In him the love of his fellow-creatures was a sentiment and an emotion which formed, as we might say, an essential element of his nature; and yet, in the outpouring of his love to mankind, he never shrank from what was due to the honour of God and the majesty of truth. No one conversant with his writings can have failed to discern that his love for the creature was always connected with, and in subordination to, love to the Creator. Indeed, his great objection to the man who does not love his fellow-men is, that he cannot in that case be expected to love his God. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." Zeal for God's glory must, when needful, assume the sterner character of the censor. If justice, rigid and impartial justice, must have its course, still it should be tempered with the faculty of mercy. Mercy herself must know when to give place to Judgment; and this we find beautifully illustrated in the character

of St John. We feel, when we read his glowing and tender words, that he would do all for a fellow-creature except to tamper with the honour of God's name and word; and this view of his character, which we should deduce from his writings, is further developed in two anecdotes found in church history, and which are generally believed to have all the marks of authenticity;—and we are the more disposed to receive them as genuine from their having nothing of a marvellous or legendary character attached to them. The first anecdote illustrates the undying spirit of love which pervaded his whole nature, and which survived the decay of nature and the eclipse of mental faculties. When at such an advanced age that his infirmities precluded his more regularly joining in the services of the sanctuary, he used to be carried into the church, and, after stretching forth his arms and crying, "Little children, love one another," he retired; nor would he ever make any other address, but constantly repeated the words, as containing the substance of all he had to say. The second anecdote is equally authenticated, and shows us that his loving heart and tenderness of spirit never obscured, in his eyes, the guilt of corrupting the truth of God. On entering a public bath, and finding that the notorious heretic Cerinthus was under the roof, he rushed away in horror and indignation, with the words, "Let us flee from this place, lest it fall and crush the enemy of God." Now, in showing what really were the peculiar features of St John's character, we do, in fact, draw the picture of what would be the greatest glory of every

Christian believer. We have the most indubitable evidence that it is formed of qualities essentially pleasing and acceptable to the divine mind, and especially in sympathy with the divine character. The name by which John is called makes us conclude that the moral qualities of the man John were specially attractive to the man Christ Jesus. There was no want of affection to other disciples, nor was there any partiality of which they ever complained. But the moral character of John was most in harmony with the character of Jesus. There is something deeply interesting in this mutual relation of kindred qualities between Jesus and the apostle who leaned upon His breast at supper. We may without presumption conjecture that, as human beings, their tastes and dispositions were most in unison. Hence the terms by which the reciprocal feelings were expressed. The apostle, as feeling most the gentle and softened majesty of the Son of God, delighted, on many occasions, to designate Jesus as the *Lamb*. John himself gained the endearing appellation, "'The disciple whom Jesus loved." And in the development of St John's character we see more correctly, as well as more fully, reflected the gentle and loving qualities of our Lord, in so far as we see in him a character where the affectionate or loving temperament prevails, and where the tendency to a vicious exercise of it is avoided. In it men are taught to love their brethren, and yet to hate sin—to love God with all their heart, and yet to fear to violate His commandments or not to maintain His truth. We are cautioned, that in contemplating what is

loving in his character, we shall not lose sight of what is awful.

But then, again, if occasionally we have to correct errors of this kind in relation to religious truth, which spring from a *redundancy* of the affectionate in men's character, we have more frequently, I fear, to meet the case where there is deficiency, and where love is a feeble and unstable element of character. There is a worse fault in the Christian life than that of having too much affection—there is the fault of having too little. We have known men in whose temperament the softer qualities of pity, of mercy, of forbearance, and of kindly emotions, seem so imperfectly developed, or bear so disproportionate a relation to other qualities, as to mark out a distinct *defect* of character. This is found, let it be observed, also in characters otherwise endowed with good qualities—men of honour—able and upright minds—sincere Christians, and zealous for the truths of God's Holy Word. We do not now speak of the characters referred to in the second chapter—men of the Laud stamp, who, under any form of church government, are severe and merciless persecutors of all who oppose them. But we speak rather of those characters where the love of the brethren is a sentiment defective in degree, or too easily set aside—too readily chilled under adverse circumstances, rather than altogether wanting. Though they have love, it does not "suffer long;" it hardly bears enough, or believes enough, or hopes enough, or endures enough. Such men may have both faith and hope and charity in their moral constitution, but certainly it is

not as the apostles desire to have it,—that their charity is the most abundant of the three. Hence of such persons we may safely affirm that their love and good feelings are too easily alienated, and, when once alienated, too hard to be regained. There are good men who never forgive those who have once forfeited their esteem. They cannot make allowances for the infirmities and weakness of human nature. Confidence and trust once lost, is with them lost for ever. This is a case where love is in too feeble action amongst the other faculties and dispositions; for love in the Christian life *never* fails—that is, never fails entirely, but strives against the severe judgments of nature, and is ever willing to be restored. Then, again, in others you discern a defect of the quality of love from the readiness with which they pronounce the final condemnation of their brethren of mankind. Good men and sincere Christians, and in some respects men of benevolent dispositions, can with utmost composure dwell on the idea of fellow-Christians being consigned to the pains that never pass away—not on account of obstinate unbelief or unrepented sin—not because they were impure characters, or scoffers, or deniers of the Divine nature of the Redeemer—but because they have not adopted *their* polity in church government, because they do not worship Almighty God in the same form of church services. In thus consigning fellow-creatures to eternal perdition on account of conscientious differences of opinion in such matters, where good and learned men have always differed, there is surely a failure in the affectionate or benevolent element

of a Christian character, when such condemnation is passed upon a fellow-creature without reference to the moral purity and the conscientious feelings of the condemned. A loving heart would never willingly pronounce such a judgment. Like St Paul, he would condemn even the *worst* characters with pain and sorrow. He told, even "*weeping*," of some who were enemies to the cross of Christ. It seems that the very wish for men's salvation, the love that would cherish the *desire* for all men to be happy, should hold back the denunciation of their eternal misery. But it will be said, we read in the Holy Scripture of the condemnation of the enemies of God, and that we must recite the words of their doom. So let it be, provided it be declared in the words of Him to whom alone vengeance belongeth. There can be no question that our Church would have exercised a sound discretion to have omitted entirely, or to have much softened, the severity of the damnatory clauses in the Athanasian Creed. To deny or to corrupt the doctrine of the sacred and eternal Trinity in Unity, is an awful danger to man's soul—is the worst of heresies. Still we subscribe to the words of Charles Simeon, a good and holy man of our Church, now gone to his rest, and who was an enthusiastic and a zealous lover of her pure Liturgy. Those words, heard in 1812 from the Cambridge University pulpit, have never been forgotten. After having shown that the objections usually offered to the use of the Creed had not the force usually attached to them, he adds: "After all, I confess that if the same candour and moderation that are observable in all other

parts of the Liturgy had been preserved here, it would have been better. For, though I do verily believe that those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity are in a fatal error, and will find themselves so at the day of judgment, I would rather deplore the curse that awaits them than denounce it, and rather weep over them in my secret chamber, than utter anathemas against them in the house of God."

I think we have now sufficiently enlarged upon the class and form of character represented by the apostle St John. It is impossible to reflect upon its peculiar features, and not to feel how entirely a character so formed harmonises with the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and is well fitting for the discipline of the Christian life. It may have its weakness and imperfection; but the excess of love, of mercy, and of kindness, are still endearing to men's hearts; and certainly we would rather see the superabundance of such qualities than their deficiency. We turn with never-dying interest to the human beings marked by this quality, whether of our own acquaintance or as known to us from records of the past. In the history of our Church, such are the characters who are most attractive, and on whom we dwell with greatest pleasure—as in the vast, varied, and sublime landscape the eye rests at last more calmly and serenely on the quiet scenes of domestic happiness—on the still waters, the green pastures, and the peaceful flocks. Our Church has produced many holy men, distinguished in this class of Christian character: take merely as specimens the characters of Archbishop

Leighton, of Bishops Hall and Heber. It is impossible to read the life and writings of Leighton—to mark his dread of violence, strife, and controversy—his love of peace, and desire to unite all parties in the bond of unity —and not to discern a character congenial with St John. One feels that to have been with Leighton, would have been to converse with one whose spirit was in harmony with the spirit of the beloved disciple. Bishop Hall of Norwich lived in difficult and troublous times. His spirit was sorely vexed by oppression and wrongs done to himself and his Church; and therefore *his* gentle and loving demeanour was the more conspicuous because it had been so severely tried. Bishop Heber comes nearer our own times, and we have the testimony of those who remember his active virtues and his earnest piety. It is a delightful testimony to the charm of a character based upon the temper of St John, that, widely known as was the character of the Bishop, and active as was his course, especially in India, his name is treated with affection and respect by all, whether of his own communion or not. Nor let difference of creed prevent our adding to these the name of a distinguished member of the Church of Rome, the gentle and holy-minded Fénélon. Such men, whatever be their Church, are in harmony with St John, and supply examples of Christian characters acting towards all men under the benign influence of a loving and quiet spirit, by following Jesus in simplicity and meek benevolence. The gospel, when it comes home to hearts so disposed, has no doubt formed the finest specimens of human character on earth, and has shown the

mortal nature most nearly approaching the divine. We feel a want when, in our greatest divines and ablest writers, we discern any defect of these gentler traits of nature. On the other hand, what so interesting as the most powerful intellect in its moments of pity, and when softened into a tender compassion? And just as the highest attribute of kings is shown by the exercise of mercy, so we reverence the Saviour when He speaks peace to a troubled heart, or when He restores an only son to the arms of a widowed mother, perhaps with a deeper emotion than when we see Him calm the sea and control the elements of nature. There is, we fear, sometimes an idea, that in the character where love and compassion have the prominent place, there *must* be a certain degree of weakness in action, a feebleness of purpose, and a want of firmness and decision. The history of the Church records that love and energy are not inconsistent, and in the Christian life as pursued by such men we see the examples. In some of the most gentle spirits have been found the firmest action and the most burning zeal; hearts which melted with tenderness at human sorrows have known the promptings of noblest deeds, and have reached the most exalted heights of sublime devotion. Take the case of the apostle who imbibed the gentle spirit of the Redeemer's bosom on which he leaned, and you find at the same time that he fully equalled the other apostles in the ardour of his zeal and the elevation of his spirit. The preference of his Lord given to John, which procured for that apostle the undying appellation of the disciple whom Jesus

loved, was not confined to the mere personal intercourse of the life of Jesus. He trusted John for the fulfilment of important duties, for executing a high commission. What more undoubted proof of confidence could have been given, than the charge of His widowed mother which He committed to John? No sooner had the Saviour commenced His suffering and lingering death for a guilty race, than He saw His mother standing by the cross along with the disciple whom He loved. He at once consigned His parent to the care of the disciple—"Behold thy son;" and the disciple He invested with the sacred charge—"Behold thy mother." John was more than tender in name. From that hour, records the evangelical historian, John took her to his own home. By thus committing to the beloved disciple so precious a deposit, our Saviour showed that He had confidence in the steadfastness and truth of John's character, as well as assurance of his loving nature. John took an active part in those concerns of the Church which immediately followed the resurrection and ascension of our Lord. He was spared to serve in the Church a long time; the historical tradition is, that he lived to a hundred years, and died in peace amongst his friends. During this period very high and important missions were committed to his care. He it was who warned the Seven Churches of Asia, and conveyed to the angel or bishop of each one a solemn message from the great Head of the universal Church on earth. He it was who wrote the mysteries of the Church's futurity, and who was inspired to see and record the visions of worship in

heaven. We are now considering an apostle of Jesus, who is the obvious type and emblem of the Affectionate temperament—the loving nature. You cannot but discern that portion of his mind—that ruling passion, we might call it—when you study his Gospel and three General Epistles. But we must study the character throughout. You must go and see John as the lonely recluse of the Isle of Patmos; you must see John as the man of lofty mind as well as the man of loving mind. St John could awe with sublimity, as well as melt with tenderness. Now think of John as the author of the Apocalypse, and if you find how difficult it is to form into an intelligible and distinct system of prophetic scheme the whole details of seals, trumpets, the beast with seven horns, the serpent crowned, the vials, and the dragon, on which so many volumes have been written, and on which so much difference of opinion has existed amongst the commentators on Holy Scripture, yet, take the passages which describe the scenes of glory, near the immediate presence of the Ancient of Days, of the Lamb, and of the Seven Spirits of God. Take those divine and superhuman passages which tell of the glorious strains of praise and adoration offered without ceasing before God by the countless choirs of heaven's high worshippers, and then say what *can* be so pure and exalting as the emotions which they are calculated to raise in the hearts and minds of earthly worshippers! Yes! there is something awful in our perusal of these passages. Open the volume with reverence, read with devout attention, and then you will close it with grateful praise. We cannot

sympathise with the spirit that could approach these passages with indifference. We do not envy the unconsciousness of divine presence which fails to discern a power not of earthly mould—a force of language not of earthly eloquence. Oh, rather should we, on reading this book, feel as if in the presence of a Christian teacher who tells of the divine purposes and character with more than the sublimity of the ancient prophets. Endowed with a disposition at once gentle and sublime, St John mingles among worshippers before the throne, communes with beings of the highest order, and surveys the splendours of the celestial temple with an eye that never quailed before its excessive light. Here, then, we should feel like worshippers in the position of Moses when told to put off his shoes, for the place whereon he stood was holy ground; or, like another holy patriarch of old, the spirit of the devout Christian reader should be ever ready to exclaim, "Surely the Lord is in this place!"

We have dwelt more at length on this part of St John's history, that we might bring forward the capacity of joining gentleness and power in the same character—of having the greatest tenderness associated with the loftiest elevation. Love is no element of *weakness* in the Christian character; the kindest hearts are often capable of inflexible firmness of purpose, and the gentlest dispositions will often rise to glorious aspirations. In such cases, then, we see how Christian virtues which, to careless and to worldly hearts, seem incompatible, may happily in the Christian life be made to blend and harmonise with each other; and we conclude this portion

of our subject with two brief observations, which may assist us in forming a right judgment in regard to our own moral qualities and the qualities of others.

1. We should never rest satisfied with ourselves when we find the want of this quality. Every character is defective—not only defective without *some admixture* of the attribute of love, but in a Christian point of view defective without its constant exercise and abiding influence. There are natural wrong tendencies of our nature, which love, and love only, as an active agency, can correct and improve.

2. We should never deliberately excuse or palliate a deficiency in the spirit of love, kindness, and forgiveness, on any of those worldly and selfish pleas urged so often by those who have too little sympathy with the character of the apostle of whom we are now speaking. Such, we mean, as these,—that we have received too much provocation from the world—too much ingratitude and wrong, to have much love to the brethren; or that our natural temperament or disposition is too defective in the development of this quality for us to remedy the deficiency; or that, if we are hard and severe and unforgiving in disposition, we, at any rate, labour in the performance of duty, and serve God conscientiously. Now, mark how futile must be all such pleas and excuses before a holy and a heart-searching God. Holy Scripture has told us that, let the world be unreasonable, perverse, and unkind as it may, Christian charity never *fails*, but will bear to the end, and believe, and hope, and endure all things. Further, Holy Scrip-

ture directs that if any one lack what is needful under the guidance of nature, he should ask for it, and strive to attain it under the economy of grace, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit of God. And, lastly, if any one suppose that, by his rigid performance of duty, or by zeal in the acquisition of religious knowledge, he may dispense with the pervading spirit of the beloved disciple, let him bear in mind how it was declared by an inspired apostle of the highest attainments in the Church, That though he should speak with the tongue of men and angels, though he had the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries and all knowledge, though he had faith so great that he could remove mountains, and though he should bestow all his goods to feed the poor, and give his body to be burned for God's truth and God's glory, yet that if he lacked CHARITY, all this would profit him nothing.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRACTICAL CHARACTER IN OPERATION FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

WE have now to consider the last of the four types or classes of character which have been so often named—and that is the Practical type, especially represented amongst the apostles by St James. The character is a common one, and distinctly marked out in human life. Let us briefly describe its leading peculiarities.

We not unfrequently observe in human life men whose minds and powers are specially adapted for carrying out the execution of details in human affairs, for doing the *practical* portion of every enterprise, and who seem to delight in employment for its own sake. Such men are usually averse to speculative or theoretic views of subjects on which they are engaged; usually, also, they are without much play of fancy or imagination; not necessarily deficient either in reasoning faculties or in strong affections, still the bias is for *action*, and the judgment on any question is rather directed by the practical and tangible result than by any abstract re-

presentation of theoretical fitness and ingenuity. From this class we draw the useful and accurate labourers in the various departments of human knowledge and human affairs—in literature, in science, in law, and in political government. In them have been found that intense application, those correct and patient labours, which were necessary to produce many of the results which are so useful and important to the wellbeing of society and of individuals. From this class come the correct man of business, and no doubt the man of intense application for *his own interest* and advancement. But from this class also comes the steady and trustworthy servant of the public, men who are scrupulous as to the fulfilment of every appointed task. And, with natures so constituted, and with dispositions so endowed, the peculiarities of such characters must be obvious, and be quite as apparent in the possessor under *religious* as under social relations. In other words, highly practical minds are not less marked and developed for the Christian than for the worldly life. Of this we have a proof in the peculiarities which distinguish St James from the three other apostles of whom we have made mention. St James is eminently the *practical* apostolic teacher. Where others speculate, he would act; where others theorise, he would come to experience; where others enlarge upon the *nature* of an abstract principle, he would call for proof of its excellence by an appeal to its actual results. The disposition of St James is a marked one, and readily recognised amongst the four varieties of apostolic char-

acter; when, for example, we notice how their peculiarities are made manifest in their mode of appreciating the great truths of the gospel, and in their manner of approaching and adopting them; or, in other words, when we examine their mode of *arriving at* religious truth. St Paul's religion, for example, was the result of reasoning from great principles. He goes back to the primary elements of eternal truth, and he works out from them a living and harmonious image of God's revealed scheme of human salvation. St Peter grasped at divine truth, and adopted what he saw before him, not on reflection but on feeling, and often acted without estimating his own power. Hence St Peter's knowledge was formed through a series of mistakes and falls, corrected by a severe discipline of tears and mortification. St John, again, hardly reasons; he *feels* truth; he loves the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is enough. His heart is so warm and glowing for Christ and His truth, that love takes the place of reasoning, and supplies the motives to a devoted service. St John, if we may speak so, was more *like* the man Christ Jesus than any of his brethren; and of him, perhaps, might it be more certainly said, "Christ was formed in him." Then St James comes forward with his practical and common-sense views of what religion is, and of what God requires. With St James, reasoning, impulses, professions of sentiment and affection, are not exactly discouraged, but certainly they are not admitted as genuine religion till they have been fully tested by experience. But in order to institute a right comparison of St James with

other apostles, let us trace his character as it is brought before us both in the writings of the New Testament and the ancient records of the Church.

There were two apostles of the name. James the Greater, or elder, was a son of Zebedee, and, consequently, a brother of St John. He was called by our Lord from his profession as a fisherman; he was one of the three present at the transfiguration; he was named, along with John, Boanerges, a son of thunder, for the reason, it is supposed, of proposing that fire from heaven should be called down on the Samaritans who refused to admit our Lord into their village. The other apostle of the name, to whom we now refer, and who wrote the Epistle, is surnamed the Less, probably because the younger. He is called, according to the usage of the time, the *brother* of our Lord; *i. e.*, a cousin, being the son of Cleophas and Mary, who was the sister of Mary, mother of our Lord. Of many incidents of his life after our Lord's ascension, we have knowledge upon good authority in ecclesiastical history. It is quite evident that he was the first Bishop of Jerusalem; as such he appears to have presided over the first council held there, and in that capacity he pronounced the decision of the court on the question of the licence to be allowed to Jewish converts regarding compliance with the ceremonies of the Mosaic law. As an upright, useful ruler of the infant Church, he was held in the highest esteem by early Christians. He is surnamed the Just by ancient writers, on account of his strict integrity and upright dealing; and the respect which he enjoyed from

his Christian brethren was given to him also by *all* his countrymen, the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He was held in great and general estimation on account of his honourable and straightforward conduct; so high was this consideration, that it was determined to refer to him the point of duty as to belief in Christ. They put the question before the whole assembled people: "Tell us, thou just man, what we should believe concerning Jesus who was crucified?" His formal answer to this question was characteristic of his bold and fearless regard for the truth, and at the same its form was in accordance with the *practical* turn of his mind; for, instead of entering upon general arguments, or abstract reasonings, from the writings of the prophets, and the predictions regarding a Saviour promised to the Jewish people, he takes up a great *fact*, and puts the people upon considering a great practical issue. He answered, with a loud voice, "Jesus, the Son of Man, whom you speak of, is now seated on the right hand of the Supreme Majesty, as Son of God, and must one day come, borne upon the clouds of heaven." The Pharisees and doctors, enraged at the effects of this solemn declaration from one of such weight of character, stirred up a tumult against him, and he suffered martyrdom. But with the majority of the people there arose a great feeling of indignation at the violent death of one whose upright character and practical benevolence had gained their fullest admiration. Now, in looking over the pages of his Epistle, we cannot but discern the same characteristics. We see how thoroughly practical were all his

views of Christian doctrine, and how thoroughly he applies the great principle of bringing all professions to the test of practical results. We can only just glance at the leading ideas of the Epistle. In regard to temptation, he will not listen to the notion of a man excusing himself in sin on the ground of an external temptation coming on him, and which, if permitted, might possibly furnish a plea for human error. No! He at once brings the question home to the man himself, and declares that *he* is the party responsible: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (i. 13, 14). Then, again, how strenuously he exhorts men to show their religion, not by mere hearing of the word, but by *doing* what that word requires. He shows how fallacious is the offering of the forgetful hearer, and that only the doer of the work shall be blessed in his deed. With St James, religion, however loud and orthodox in its profession, is but a vain pretence in him who bridleth not his tongue. Nay, such a one, so wanting in a great practical religious duty, after all, only "*seemeth* to be religious." He insists upon obedience—*i.e.*, the spirit and desire for obedience extending to the whole law—and asserts that "he who offends in one point is guilty of all." He exclaims with indignation against the very idea of faith having any value without works: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith" (*i.e.*, faith alone)

"save him? Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (ii. 14, 17). And then he goes on to show how it was by acts and not by profession that the great patriarch of the older economy gained the blessed character of being called "the Friend of God;" and so the whole teaching of this Epistle is so constructed as to bring out in full relief the practical character of vital godliness—to show every religious inquirer that pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is not profession and theory, but the doing His will in acts of self-denial and benevolence, "to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Now, of all the eminent divines belonging to our Church, the type or resemblance for St James is clearly, I think, to be found in Barrow—Dr Isaac Barrow—whose name and writings are familiar to those who have any acquaintance with the great English divines. His mode of writing is to exhibit Christian truth in all its practical detail and application to human life. He examines his subjects entirely with a view to such practical ends and objects. He rather takes the great and leading *principles* of Christian theology for granted, than dwells upon the proof, but delights to erect upon them a consistent and harmonious edifice of Christian *duty*. He has no flights of fancy—no speculations on the doubtful and uncertain. The very titles of his discourses point out how complete a system of moral duty he meditates as applicable to the ordinary walk of Christian life and conduct. Thus we have such topics as these handled with much

acuteness and discrimination—"Upright Walking;" "Wise Walking;" against "Foolish Talking;" "Evil Speaking;" "Meekness;" and "Doing our own Business;" "Love of our Neighbour;" "Charity;" "Patience;" "Contentment;" "Submission." We have, from such topics, a code of Christian morals, and a course of conduct such as a belief in Christian doctrine should exhibit to the world; and therein, as an uninspired writer, he shows himself a fitting follower and disciple of the great inspired apostle of practical godliness.

Paley is another example of a distinguished practical teacher. He is never carried away by flights of eloquence—never impulsive, imaginative, or sentimental. Practical conclusions are what he looks to—real, useful, consistent views of God's character and commands. He commences with laying down fundamental propositions, and keeps great principles before him. But his real power is shown in working out the practical issues—in exhibiting them, not so much in their abstract character, as in their uses and application to human life and human beings. In this point of view, the Natural Theology, and works on Christian Evidences, of Paley, will always be distinguished as most useful labours in the Church of Christ.

The *practical* phase of human character as typified and as illustrated in the character of St James, is of course a most important element of the Christian life. It involves, in fact, the great and essential principle of all religion—the principle of DUTY. We may indeed ask what,

without proper fruits and results, is the good of *any* moral qualities in the service of religion? What, for instance, is the use of the clearest intellect for the cause of truth? What is fine impulse or high imaginative aspirations? What is the most ardent *love* in the Christian disciple, if it does not tend to practical results? What are wisdom's conclusions, or affection's impulses, if they do not make men *act* as Christian believers? Our blessed Lord declared that men should be known or distinguished by their *fruits;* that the test of love to Him should be keeping His commandments; that it was not by loud or vehement professions of attachment that men should enter into the kingdom of heaven, but by their *doing* the will of His Father in heaven. Nay, more than this, Jesus, in that profound and divine principle wherein He expounds the rule for men gaining true knowledge and sound belief of God's holy teaching, places obedience as the primary step of the Spirit's process to lead them to a real sense of the divine will, as given to the world through the gospel of His Son: "If any man will *do* His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." The world reverses the proposition, and men are ready to declare—"If I could once firmly believe, I would act up to the divine teaching." Jesus says to those anxious to commence the Christian life, *Act* first your obedience, and you will soon know of the doctrine that it is divine. But here, as in all questions of practical theology, a difficulty, or rather perhaps a question of controversy, has occurred, so that, through the perverseness of man's nature, some obscurity has

been thrown over the question of the bearing which practical exertions should have upon the scheme of man's salvation under the economy of grace. Although obedience to God's moral law, and active discharge of the various duties of human life, form so important an element of the Christian character, and belong so clearly to the religious life of every believer in Jesus as the Saviour of the world, and the moral example for the redeemed to follow; still it must be observed that no good deeds, the most eminent or praiseworthy, are, *in themselves*, acceptable to God in a religious point of view, unless they proceed from a principle of love to Him; and that no works, however elaborate, establish a principle of Christian holiness, except those which are the fruits of faith,—unless done for Christ's sake, and done in obedience to His command. This gives us a criterion whereby to judge of our supposed good actions, whether they be of God or of the world. Works done without the grace of God—*i.e.*, purposely without dependence upon that grace, or done from motives of vanity, self-interest, or mere constitutional tendencies—are not the works which constitute the essential elements of Christian practical godliness. Many persons who belong to the class of character represented by St James, may have a tendency to fall into the error; although St James himself, practical as he was, never countenanced such a notion. His Epistle has been represented as *opposed* to St Paul's Epistle to the Romans—St Paul being represented as teaching justification by faith, St James as teaching justification by works. But St James

no more excludes faith than St Paul excludes good works. Both apostles are speaking of justification. But the justification of St James applies to a different period than that referred to by St Paul. St Paul refers to the justification or acceptance of a sinner, which can only be accomplished by faith in the Redeemer, and can have no immediate reference to works at all. St James, on the other hand, refers to the justification of a believer, which can only be made manifest and proved by suitable works of a godly and religious life. And in teaching this great truth, he has established an undying name amongst the glorious company of the apostles as the great Christian MORALIST. He has established beyond all question that the Christian life must show forth the virtues of *obedience* no less than the profession of a sound *faith*, and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord in glory.

These, then, are some important questions connected with the subject of that diversity of character observable in Christian believers throughout the whole range of Christ's Church. When we consider men as individuals, the varieties are so numerous as to become perplexing and unmanageable, for perhaps no two persons in the world perfectly resemble each other in the construction and peculiar operations of their mind. We, therefore, group these diversities into classes, and we shall find that, taking the class personally unrepresented in Scripture, and the four classes named from the four leading apostles —viz., the Intellectual, the Impulsive, the Affectionate, and the Practical—we may form a tolerably accurate estimate of our fallen nature, and of its various aspects

under the economy of grace. Both as regards ourselves and as regards others, we may, I am convinced, find much practical use and benefit in the study of these peculiarities stamped by Providence upon human characters. For ourselves it ought to suggest the constant reflection, Wherein have I failed in leading the inner or spiritual life? wherein have I been defective or deficient? No doubt, every shade and variety of human character has its own peculiar besetting temptation to error, and may fall into its own unchristian tendency of disposition, unless guided by the teaching of grace, and unless checked by the correction of Christian truth. For example, amongst the four classes, it will be found that the Intellectual temperament, when without Christian humility, may produce the sceptical and doubting disposition, always cavilling, always aiming at being wise above what is written. From the Impulsive temperament without discipline, may be formed the restless, unsettled, and uncertain character, always in action, but accomplishing nothing good that is sure and permanent. The Loving character may become indolent—may not discriminate between right and wrong—and may not be sufficiently firm to uphold the right or condemn the wrong. The Practical man of diligence and labour may, if he be not watchful over himself, be tempted to form a worldly estimate of religious questions, and reduce the high and pure principles of gospel salvation to a mere formal compliance with some external duties of social life. Such reflections ought to suggest the inquiry, How far have I, in my Christian course, sought to correct and

supply, under the teaching and strength of grace, the shortcomings of my nature? How far have I been striving to improve the special gifts I possess, and make them instruments in God's service to foster the disposition that points to *good*, and check the disposition that leads to what is ungodly? In regard to others these reflections would teach us forbearance and kind consideration. We should be more disposed to take men as they are, to value the good they have, and to make due allowance for the special faults of those who have to contend against peculiar and constitutional defects. All the dispensations of God's providence whereby men differ from one another, are intended as instruments for good to promote His glory; and varieties of temperament, we easily see, may be made to answer that purpose in the economy of grace, and under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit of God. Nor can we say that the differences which have distinguished believers in the Church below shall entirely cease when earthly believers become the glorified and redeemed in heaven.

The present world, as a condition of trial and probation, is the field whereon we exercise the virtues and foster the qualities which are to endure for ever. It is the commencement on earth of a life which is to be perfected in heaven. The divine economy, as regards our sanctification and future happiness, is not closed at the general resurrection and the final judgment; it in fact only then *commences*, and will be carried on through the ages of eternity. What is done here we may consider as a type or image of what is to come. There may be points

of resemblance of which we are now ignorant; and God, in His power, and wisdom, and goodness, may make use of many means of advancement in glory which are now means of our service on earth; and just as here below the spirit advances under grace from one step of improvement to another, so hereafter may the soul advance in endless progression, and develop its powers and faculties in God's service throughout the countless ages of eternity. Who shall say that diversities of gifts may not still prevail amongst the spirits of just men made perfect near the throne of the Most High?

We know that there are diversities of orders and gradations of rank in the heavenly hierarchy, as "angels, principalities, thrones, dominions, powers," and why not differences of disposition and of temperament analogous in some degree with what subsists on earth, but *there*, of course, without the defects and failings which cleave to every human affection and every human faculty? For example, amongst the heavenly hierarchy we read of the "Cherubim" and the "Seraphim," two orders of heaven's inmates. Now, those who are learned in Eastern languages and terms of expression tell us that, according to Hebrew idiom, there is a difference in the qualities and functions of these Cherubim and Seraphim; that the appellation of Cherub has the sense of power or strength, the faculty of executing great commissions by means of that power, and therefore the earthly type of the Cherubim was a composite being, having the form of the man, the ox, the lion, and the eagle. The Seraph, on the other hand, implies the idea

of swiftness of motion, combined with the more subtle quality of penetrating everything it approaches, and these qualities are combined in the earthly type of a flying fiery serpent. Cherubim and Seraphim, therefore, seem appointed to different offices in the services above, and are for this difference specially fitted by their qualities. So also the spirits of just men made perfect, when brought to join the angelic host, and to form a portion of the heavenly hierarchy—the final Church of the redeemed,—may also have distinct offices, for which their qualities will adapt them for their high behests, received from the great Father and Ruler of all. Men may serve God above in glory according to the analogy of their serving Him in the Christian course of trial, and of self-crucifixion when below. In one section of the blessed, intellect may still predominate in their happy attendance upon the Eternal Three in One. *Their* office may be to climb the infinite heights of knowledge which belong to the works, the character, and the attributes of Jehovah,—to be ever advancing in knowledge themselves, and raising upwards the knowledge of others. Theirs may be the delightful task of bringing together all the elements of eternal truth, to present them before listening groups of blessed spirits, illustrating the harmony and beauty of God's ways and works in such august and glorious terms as those with which Paul on earth discoursed on the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul, but made in heaven still more august and still more glorious. Impulsive spirits may still retain their ardour, but without the weakness

or instability of the mortal condition, and the imaginative faculties and propensities find full exercise in sharing the high offices of the Seraphim, whose zeal is ever burning like the living flame. To spirits partaking more fully of the quality that distinguished the disciple who leaned upon his Master's breast at supper, there can be no lack of exercise in a state where love is perfected in God's own presence, and near the eternal throne of the sacred Three in One,—where the blessed Saviour is revealed without disguise or veil to His own people, and where they see Him face to face in the grace of His eternal and assumed perfect nature:—their office, it may be, to direct others, to show to heaven's blessed inmates the constantly recurring marvels of the indescribable benefits of the cross, and the unsearchable *riches* of Christ's redeeming love. Whilst the practical and active energies of Christian believers, which were so useful and so distinguished on earth, may find scope for an exercise which shall distinguish them as spirits in immortal bliss. They may especially belong to that class of angelic beings emphatically called in the Holy Scripture "*ministering spirits*," employed by the great Father and Ruler of the universe in His works of love and messages of beneficence amongst the great and happy family of the blessed.

Nor do we give these as vague speculations, or as random surmises. They are probable conclusions regarding our improved nature in heaven, and drawn from what we can discern of the purposes of infinite wisdom and goodness, as manifested in the economy of the pre-

sent moral and spiritual condition of our nature. We are assured that no gifts and graces of the divine Giver are for a limited period, or belong exclusively to time, but are intended to be consummated through the ages of eternity. They belong to an undying life, and are begun here in weakness and imperfection, in order that they may be consummated in a life which is a condition of glorified humanity and pure moral advancement. This leads directly to the one great lesson which we have endeavoured to embody and illustrate throughout the whole of these remarks on Diversities of Gifts and Character in Christian believers, as brought to bear upon the various relations of a Christian life—viz., that we should diligently and carefully cherish what we feel in us to be good, as coming to us from above, and with equal care and diligence to repress and correct what is evil, as coming from ourselves. We differ from one another as to many external circumstances. We differ in talents, in powers and opportunities of usefulness, in natural disposition and constitutional tendencies. But we are all under one and the same spiritual economy—we belong to one and the same religious dispensation; under that economy and that dispensation we have, with powers and opportunities, however varied and however unequal, to promote the same object; and that is, with every faculty we possess to obtain the salvation of our own souls, to promote within our sphere of influence the glory of God and the advancement of His truth. Differently as our minds are constituted, variously

as our gifts are apportioned, our future destiny depends upon the use we make of them, upon the account we render to that divine Being from whom they descended, because, although there are through Christ's church and kingdom a vast diversity of gifts, there is throughout only the ONE AND THE SELF-SAME SPIRIT.

PART III.

PART THIRD.

DIVERSITIES OF FAULTS AS MANIFESTED BY BELIEVERS EVEN WHILST PURSUING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

EXPLANATORY OF THE SUBJECT PROPOSED.

IN this Part we enter upon another division of our subject, which is, *A description of the faults and shortcomings which are found to lurk under various disguises in religious characters themselves.* We propose some examination into the *causes* which lead Christian believers of certain dispositions and certain natural tendencies into errors peculiar to themselves, and which form a discredit and serious drawback to their advancement in the spiritual life. It will be our endeavour to point out the various *delusions* under which these defects gain ground in the hearts of different individuals, and to detect those various sophistries from which they derive their power, and under which their presence and influence are often secret from those who should have given all diligence to banish them from their hearts. *As a*

question of practical theology, it is an important inquiry, and an inquiry which may lead to some vital considerations regarding the true state of men's religious character and conduct; and, in fact, opens the great question, "Why do not believers become more perfected in practical holiness?" It is a frequent subject for sermons and lectures, to display a *downward* course of vice and folly; to point out the sins and offences of bad men; to show how they gain the supremacy over reason and conscience; and to describe how at last the soul is lost, and men die hardened and impenitent. It is also a constantly interesting and edifying topic for preaching and for writing, to enlarge upon the virtues and holy deeds of good men—to trace the onward course of Christian goodness and true righteousness in its progressive state of sanctification, under which men at last attain the highest elevation of piety and self-denial of which human nature is, in its present condition, capable. It is not infrequent also to dwell upon the virtues which are occasionally found in men of otherwise unholy lives and ungodly principles—to show how persons who are under no religious restraints, or who have adopted no religious rule of gospel discipline, may yet, upon merely worldly motives, or from mere natural and constitutional dispositions, exhibit many virtuous and benevolent emotions —may often act nobly and generously, although the heart is far from God, and the religion of the Cross has little hold upon the affections and the intellect. It is easy, in short, to show that there may be virtues of moral sentiment where there is no real principle of

vital godliness and Christian piety in the heart. But we do not so frequently hear of the shortcomings of Christian believers; and yet it is a serious inquiry to mark the errors by which the really pious lives of some men are painfully deteriorated—to trace those defects from which none (even the best) are entirely exempt.

Now this subject deserves the most careful examination and serious self-application. It may not improperly be considered as, in some sense, a sequel to the previous remarks on "Diversities of Christian CHARACTER"—*i. e.*, the peculiarities which distinguish individuals from one another, whether those peculiarities take the form of talents, or gifts, or natural dispositions. As human beings, those varieties are sufficiently marked; and no one can avoid observing how numerous are the natural differences by which men are distinguished from each other, and how men become religious without losing their characteristic and constitutional distinctions. And therefore, after having endeavoured to show how good men may exhibit, through a high religious profession, their native bias and constitutional tendency of mind, it seems a very legitimate extension of the inquiry to ask how far these peculiarities have a tendency to lead men into peculiar *errors*—those errors, in fact, of which an apostle speaks as the "sins that do most easily beset us." We know how deceitful and how fallible are all human emotions. We know how often men are led astray by the very impulse to do right,—that, if not carefully guarded, every feeling, however pure and honourable in itself, is liable to take a wrong

direction, or to work out a dangerous extreme. It will often happen that men who are watchful, painstaking, and self-denying in many most important relations of life, have yet some weak point of character. Perhaps it is not going too far to say, that many of those faults of good men arise more from a misdirection and misapplication of what they believe to be a *right* principle than from indulging a bias which they know in itself is a wrong one. Men will guard their vices who suspect no harm can ever flow from their virtues. Hence we conclude that in these particular cases men are acting under a delusion; that there are causes which blind them to the real state of their hearts, and prevent them seeing their own true image and reflection. We do not directly refer to persons who are well aware of their failures in moral and religious duty. Were such to be called on to speak truth, they would not attempt to palliate their offence, nor would they deny the fact of their offending. They might express regret that it should be so, but they have taken no such decided stand in a religious point of view—have made no such marked profession of a religious life as to bring home, in strong and full conviction, an inconsistency between their practice and their profession. They satisfy their conscience that they are not insincere, and they hope to take up ere long a better conduct and a stricter faith. But the faults of which we now speak are not generally faults which those who commit them are willing to acknowledge themselves to be cognisant of. They may be faults, however, inconsistent with the religious pro-

fession of those in whom they are found. And these faults are the more lamentable, as being often noticed in connection even with a very *high* religious profession; and of those we say there must be some principle of self-delusion, some motives and causes at work which blind them to their real state and condition. There is no end to the deceits and perversities of the human heart, or to the subterfuges of insincerity, or to the various ways in which men evade conviction, and even escape from honest, searching, self-examination at all, so that faults and defects are allowed to lurk in their character unseen and unnoticed by themselves, but often quite apparent to bystanders who do not share the same blindness of self-love, and have not the same prejudices or partialities to overcome. This is a general statement of the faults in professing Christians' characters which we propose to examine. But there is a phase of the question which goes beyond faults and frailties; I mean the case of gross sin, and palpable offences against honesty and purity of life, in those who have through it all made a loud profession of religion, and persuade themselves that they are leading the Christian life. We would inquire with trembling what *can* be the delusion under which the world has seen the combination of bad morals with high religious belief. It is indeed a fearful and appalling state of mind into which some men must have fallen, to produce the inconsistencies of character which have been of late so frequently presented to the public eye. All seemed fair externally; but oh! how offensive, how dark and deceitful, were the features of

the soul as seen by Him to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid! We can imagine the case of a charming landscape, with all the accompaniments of what is lovely in nature and stately in art, defaced by some foul blot, some pestilent stream, some hideous and squalid factory. We may suppose the beauty of a delicate or noble countenance disfigured by a loathsome natural blemish, or by a passing expression of some dark and unholy passion. We may picture a rose in its blush of pride and colour concealing a worm—a corroding and destructive worm—beneath its petals. We may imagine strains of sacred music, to which an angel's ear might listen with pleasure, marred and crossed by some tones of harsh and painful dissonance which destroy all enjoyment of the harmony; —these and many other such resemblances tend to illustrate the case of a professedly religious character discovered in the indulgence of some hidden crime, showing all that is plausible to the world, but within cherishing a deadly and fatal sin. It is a terrible practical illustration of the Scripture representation of the human heart, which is there pronounced to be "deceitful above all things," as well as being "desperately wicked." This, it will be said, is an extreme case; and though, unfortunately, it does happen, still it happens seldom, and such cases cannot be brought forward as specimens of what are generally applicable to persons pursuing the Christian course. We certainly should not do so. But, alas! we fear the principle is the same —the difference only in degree. And how often may

the complaint go forth concerning some Christian believer, of the one fault or the one defect which mars the beauty and harmony of the whole character! Of such a one, how often might we have said, Oh that he were free from this failing! oh that he had overcome this weakness! for then he might have seemed indeed but a "little lower than the angels." We are aware of a solution frequently given as a reason for the phenomenon of immoral conduct and religious profession: we have a brief explanation of the inconsistency, or the apparent inconsistency, of which we now treat. The solution and the explanation are, that in such cases there really is no inconsistency,—that the religious profession was insincere, and made *for the purpose* of covering the vicious indulgence—of pursuing the unhallowed gain;—that, in other words, the man was a hypocrite, and his religion a mockery and a deceit. I do not think the reasoning is correct, or always in accordance with fact. It is a plausible solution, and a very specious one, in the case of a high religious profession conjoined with a great and flagrant sin—with palpable and deliberate violation of God's moral law. But what are we to say of cases of less offending? Where is the point at which the solution fails; and where does the offending of a religious character cease to be hypocrisy; and when does it become a simple case of human weakness, of mental blindness, and of fallible good resolution? Yes! depend upon it, often and often religious men are found wanting without being determined hypocrites. And even in regard to

the case of extreme and painful examples to which we have referred, we may often discern how they may have proceeded from the deceitfulness of sin, and the blindness of human vision to the real state of the heart and its secret springs of action — not to recklessness, or contempt of God's law, or hypocrisy. But we have convincing proof that men of religious profession, and men who have been earnest and sincere in that profession, may fall into grievous sin, and that without a voluntary dereliction of their religious character—without becoming atheists or unbelievers. In proof of which we may refer to this fact—viz., that when, from particular circumstances, they have become *conscious* of their offence, and have become awakened to the guilt and inconsistency of their conduct, they have evinced the deepest penitence, and earnestly have desired to make their peace with God, and return to the paths of piety and a humble walking with God. A veil seems to have been withdrawn from their mental and spiritual vision; scales seem to have fallen from their eyes; and they are quite as much as others shocked and grieved at the past. They will then mourn in bitterness of spirit over the errors of their past conduct, and deeply lament their past blindness. When David (who, under the older dispensation, and according to the economy of the law, was a religious man) heard his own crime described, he blamed it without reserve. He had no hesitation as to the sentence which ought to be passed; his anger was greatly kindled against the supposed offender; and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord liveth,

the man that hath done this thing shall surely die." But when the prophet showed him that the fault was his own, he was humbled before God, and acknowledged that he had sinned; and he wrote those touching and imperishable penitential psalms to express his contrition and his folly. If such blindness can exist with regard to great sins, how much more may we expect that Christian men may fall unawares into *lesser* faults, which, when not directly assailed, become roots of bitterness, to spring up unobserved, and trouble the peace, and endanger the Christian consistency, and even the truth, of their Christian walk.

To rouse the heart from such delusion—to point out where the error may creep in—to stimulate all exertions—to correct the evils which unconsciously a besetting sin may engender, is the object of the present remarks. They are specially directed against faults which men may commit who are otherwise zealous in their Christian profession. We do not now so much seek to awaken the *sinner*, as to guard the awakened—not so much to arouse the careless, as to remind the forgetful on their unguarded points—not so much to urge men that they *enter* upon the path of life, as that they steadily *pursue* it. We would show, that of such faults clinging to the Christian character there are four classes, corresponding perhaps more especially to the four classes or four diversities of Christian character already considered. We mean that the qualities of each mind lead to congenial faults—that some are congenial to the Intellectual, some to the Affectionate, some to the Impulsive, and some to the Practical.

Before, however, we proceed to name these faults, we would notice in men's minds, acknowledged or sometimes unacknowledged to themselves, a sort of excuse or apology for shortcomings or failings, which would, if admitted to the extent to which it is occasionally pushed, strike at the root of all our warnings and all our instructions on the subject, and in fact would virtually supply an excuse or palliation for any defections from the strict rule of God's commandments, however great and wide they might be. The excuse to which we allude is something of this form:—"None are without faults; perfection is not to be looked for in mortal man. All have their failings and their weaknesses; allowance must be made for this quality of human nature, for temptations to go wrong are so powerful and so numerous, we can hardly expect undeviating rectitude. We must take men as they are, with their good qualities and their weak points; for no doubt all *have* their weak points, and all have besetting sins. Nor must we exact or expect too much. We must judge no one harshly: God is merciful, and will not be over-strict to mark what His weak and frail creatures do amiss, provided their hearts be right and their intentions pure." Now, like most popular modes of speaking and judging, there is here a mixture of what is true with much that is most erroneous and most dangerous. There is, at any rate, a dangerous tendency in the spirit with which such remarks are brought forward. They may, in fact, encourage the very faults we desire now to condemn. Considerations such as these that are here suggested may certainly very fairly

lead us to form a lenient judgment of *others*, and to make a large allowance for *their* errors and defects. But what we desire now to promote is an examination and a judgment which men are to form, not of others, but of *themselves*—that under no pretence or plea whatever may they insensibly grow indifferent to any transgression of God's law, or under any sophistry or subterfuge allow themselves to indulge habitually in any known bad habit or propensity. When we find it strongly urged that all men have failings, and that all men commit errors; that good men—nay, the best—have their faults; and when it is urged as a palliation for the shortcomings of those who make a profession of desiring to pursue the Christian life, we must warn those who dwell upon the statement as involving a principle, that there is a limit to that principle—nay, that there is in Holy Scripture an *opposite* principle laid down, which teaches that if sin abound in the human heart, grace does much more abound in the divine counsels of mercy—that there is no temptation against which there is not a remedy. But observe, further, we would remind them that it is a fearful question in practical theology, at what point a failing becomes a sin—at what degree of indulgence can we say of any constitutional or habitual evil bias, that it has assumed such a form as imperils our eternal welfare, as might exclude us from the kingdom of heaven? There is the anxious question always hanging over our views of human nature, What amount of deviation from the right path may show that a man can never reach the end of his journey?—in one word, What deficiencies prove a

man to be no Christian? We cannot conceal from ourselves that with many characters in the Christian Church there is much cause for anxiety on this very ground—that they are under the influence of certain habits and tendencies which they are not at sufficient pains to control; that there are temptations which they have not resisted unto blood; and that, with much that is amiable, excellent, and devout, they are allowing a besetting sin to frustrate or impede the grace of God; and so far as that sin is concerned they seem as yet to be unfitted for the kingdom of heaven. The expression made use of by our Lord in addressing one who gave promise of much that was good and acceptable to God, "Thou art not *far* from the kingdom of heaven," seems quite a clear proof that a Christian believer, strong in faith, and abounding in much fruit of faith, may yet mar it all by a sin—it may be one shortcoming—and thus, although literally *not far* from the kingdom of God, may yet fail at last in its absolute attainment. Now, when it is said of any one that he is "not far from the kingdom of heaven," the expression must carry the meaning that heaven may be lost by a partial, and by what may seem comparatively a small, offence, or by a solitary shortcoming in Christian duty. It was a solemn appeal made by Jesus himself to the ruler who came to Him asking for His guidance and assistance, that he might inherit eternal life. When Jesus reminded him of the commandments which God had set before him for his observance and direction, the ruler replied that he had kept them *all* from his youth up to the present time. So far he was able to

make a good confession. But the Redeemer showed him that much might be done, and yet something remain. "When Jesus heard these things, he said unto him," notwithstanding, "Yet lackest thou one thing." This is surely implied also in the solemn announcement of St Paul, who proclaimed the necessity for exertions and labours on his part, lest that, having preached to others, he himself, on the ground of certain dereliction of duty, might be a castaway. We cannot believe that St Paul ever seriously contemplated the contingency of his actually being cast away from the divine favour and divine acceptance; but certainly such language implies, that after great efforts and great achievements in the way of Christian godliness—even after such labours as those of St Paul—men MAY, by some weak compliance with the suggestions of indolence or temptation, forfeit the final reward. It involves very serious and very awful considerations regarding our own spiritual state and personal condition. We may rest assured that the great God and Father of the human family does not estimate His children's religious position for everlasting life on a system of *compensation*. He does not set off certain good deeds or certain good qualities as a balance to neutralise certain evil deeds or certain bad qualities. This were to give a sanction to evil, which is far removed from the spirit of the divine law. That law requires an obedience which is universal, although it be imperfect. When He says to each one of His children of mortality, "My son, give me thy heart," He asks the heart without reserve. When our Lord likens the kingdom of heaven

to leaven, which penetrates and affects the whole mass in which it has been hidden, He means that the sublime doctrines which He taught, and the holy lessons which He delivered to His followers, should permeate the *whole* man, and affect every portion of spiritual existence, without evasion and without partiality. But the question is most clearly stated by St James, and the true doctrine unequivocally asserted. To him, therefore, we appeal, and on his authority rest the views which we have endeavoured to maintain. Now, St James, in order to deter his disciples from committing sin by having respect unto persons—*i. e.*, from offending under the plea of special cases and exceptions to general laws—makes this broad and memorable declaration, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James, ii. 10). The apostle does not mean to imply here that such offences as the frailty and infirmity of human nature render inevitable, or that such offences as are followed by sincere penitence and deep compunction of heart, with desire of amendment and prayer for pardoning grace, constitute a guilt as hateful to God as violation of His whole law; for such teaching would be directly opposed to the tenor of the Gospel scheme of mercy and salvation as proclaimed by Jesus himself, and as expounded by His evangelists and apostles. But he means unhesitatingly, and without reserve, an offending (in a single point only, it may be) which is *knowing*, *wilful*, and *determined*—an offending, that is, which is persisted in after conscience, Scripture, and the remonstrance of friends or pastors, have convinced him that it

was wrong—that he persists in spite of such knowledge, reckless of consequences, and without the courage to cast it away and to reform. Such offence as *this*, in any one point of the moral law, involves a guilt of the same class and the same character as offending against the whole, and for the very reason assigned by the apostle in the verse following—"For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit *no* adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." *Any* knowing, wilful, and impenitent violation of a law of God is to brave His anger and set His authority at nought—as much so in *principle* as if the violation extended over the whole Decalogue. Where a sincere and devoted *spirit* of obedience is fixed in the heart, there can scarcely be a continued, wilful, and determined violation of *any* divine command; and where such disobedience occurs, there is much fear that the heart is not altogether right with God.

Upon the whole view of the question, therefore, before us, it is quite clear that we should carefully and devoutly examine our own hearts, and accurately and fearlessly review our conduct, as to *every* particular of the Christian life. It is the humble endeavour of these remarks, under the assistance of divine grace, to urge every one to institute such rigid examination, such impartial and searching inquiry into his real state and condition before God, as may awaken the slumbering conscience, and to warn him against the danger of saying "Lord, Lord," and not doing all the Lord commands—to point out the fatal position of those who are characterised by St James as

keeping the whole law, and yet systematically and continuously offending in one point. We would mark out the evil of the offending in *one point;* and O may that Holy Spirit of divine truth be with all who profess to believe in Jesus, that He may show clearly the perfect purity of God's moral nature, and the awful holiness of His moral law, in contrast with the errors and deceitfulness of man's heart! Our probation on earth is to conquer *every* evil habit—to root out every evil passion. The gracious purpose of the Holy Spirit of God is so to direct, and guide, and strengthen us, that we exercise entire control over all the deeds of our lives and the thoughts of our hearts. It is in this manner, and in this alone, that we can show forth and prove the sincerity of our belief in the love of Christ as manifested for our eternal salvation. And when we feel the danger of cherishing secret sins within the heart—when we feel that it is too probable we may be permitting offence to gain a place unseen, undetected, in the depths of our inner life (and who that knows human nature, and that knows himself, will not feel conscious that such *may* be his own state?)—then let us go to the blessed Jesus, who told the Jewish ruler of his "lacking *one thing*," and let us pray that the same gracious Saviour would send the Holy Spirit of God to show us the one thing, if it be *but* one, or the many things, if they *are* many, in which we are wanting. Let us bring such offences (as we should bring *all* the burdens of our sins and sorrows) to the foot of the cross of Christ. Jesus will enable every one to cast his burden upon *Him;* and thus, as life advances,

we will feel that year by year the weight of besetting sin is growing lighter,—that day by day the cords of evil habit are becoming loosened, so that we may dare to look forward to the time—the happy time—when, being fully delivered from the bondage of corruption—that evil bondage of unrighteous passion—we may pass into the glorious liberty of the children of God—liberty from the slavery of sin and the dominion of Satan.

CHAPTER II.

FAULTS OF INDOLENCE DURING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

In the last Chapter we entered upon the difficult and painful question of the faults and shortcomings which may cleave to persons who make a sincere profession of religion, and which, in fact, are too often allowed to gain a footing in the heart of the Christian believer. We noticed how cautious we should be in this matter, as we know from fatal experience that men may deceive themselves even so far as, without being absolute hypocrites or unbelievers, to retain grievous sins *along* with a high profession of religion, and thus to "hold the truth in unrighteousness." Short of such cases as these, there is, besides, this cause of anxiety for *all* Christians —the great danger of overlooking the principle laid down by St James, who gives us a solemn warning against indulging in *any one* single known and deliberate violation of the divine law, on the awful assurance that whosoever *so* offends in one point is guilty of all. And now that these specific explanations have been made in regard to what we desire to enforce, and

since this general view has been taken of our subject, and something like a general principle laid down, we propose now to point out in more detail some of those *particular faults* into which Christian believers, it is likely, may specially fall, even whilst pursuing a Christian life, and therefore against which it is our duty to give a warning and a premonition of their danger. We observe, then, that we are now concerned with those particular faults and shortcomings which are most liable to lurk unseen, and do mischief in the hearts of Christian believers. No doubt persons of particular temperament and particular disposition are liable to fall into particular classes of error, according as the sins which do most easily beset them hurry them onwards without reflection and without discrimination. We wish, therefore, to throw out such suggestions as may induce those who already make a Christian profession to examine their ways, and analyse their own motives and their own conduct. As a proof how men may be deceived, we may observe how often individuals can enlarge with sincerity and with indignation against faults and blemishes in the Christian character of *others*, when a closer and more impartial examination of themselves would have pointed to similar faults and blemishes in their *own* hearts and lives. We must not, however, rest on generalities, or leave the question of the Christian's faults and besetting sins in any sort of doubt or indistinctness. We therefore name four specific classes of such faults, which are more likely than others of a more gross and palpable nature to deceive and mislead

the wayfaring Christian. We name—1st, Faults of Indolence; 2d, Faults of Partial Zeal or Intolerance; 3d, Faults of Covetousness; 4th, Faults of Temper. And in regard to what was said on Diversities of Christian Character, we should say that persons of the Affectionate or loving disposition may be more likely to fall into faults of Indolence; persons of the Intellectual or reasoning temperament to fall into errors connected with Partial Zeal or Intolerance; persons of the Practical temperament to yield to Covetousness; persons of the Impulsive temperament to give way to Temper. We are far from asserting that such and such temperament *necessarily* leads to such and such faults, or that others are *not* liable to them. What we mean is, that persons should have special knowledge of themselves and of their own dispositions, so as to guard themselves, and take care that they do not imperceptibly fall into a particular class of faults. Of such defects, then, we are now to consider the first of those which we have enumerated, and which we fear is with many persons a besetting sin, and one which holds its place in many minds otherwise religiously and seriously disposed, so as to impede their onward progress—not to make them *irreligious*, but to keep them back from high attainment and Christian advancement: we refer to the fault of an Indolent character. But here we would premise that, under the term INDOLENCE, we mean to include many failings which are *allied* to that disposition. In fact, attention is directed rather to a *class* of faults than to any particular defect. Under this term we would include pro-

crastination, an early and too easy weariness in well-doing, religious indecision of character, and, in short, all the train of defective and feeble efforts in God's service, and often in moral duty, which are so evidently opposed to the exhortation of the wise king of Israel—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy *might*"—and which come so far short of the lesson with which the great apostle concludes his magnificent dissertation on the resurrection of the body—"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, always *abounding* in the work of the Lord." Now, it will be at once apparent that the class of faults at present referred to may often have a place in men's character without forcing themselves into a prominent and exciting notice. A great degree of indolence may prevail where yet the mind is much occupied with religious questions, and, indeed, may be consistent with a high profession of piety, and with much apparent zeal, so far as mere profession is concerned. It implies no *flagrant* violation of God's commands. There is not upon the front of indulgence in indolence any breach of the great rules of purity, justice, reverence, or temperance. It implies no fraud or dishonesty, no wanton injury of others, and is consistent with much that is really virtuous and amiable. It is, in short, on a superficial view, a negative rather than a positive defect, and all negative qualities have a tendency to lie concealed in the character. But then it implies a sad shortcoming. It is the fault of a cold and imperfect service. It is not to be affirmed of this or the other indolent Christian believer that he does *nothing*

for God—that would be unjust. The charge rather is, that he does not do *enough*. He serves God, but he serves Him without heart. He walks in the right way, in so far that he does not follow a multitude to *do* evil; but he walks listless—he does not press on—he keeps a certain place, without spirit and without energy. The character is distinctly described in Holy Scripture—described not as an evil-doer or worker of iniquity—not as one who is an enemy of God; but rather as one who does the work of God deceitfully—as one who, though not an enemy, is but a *doubtful friend* of the cause of God's truth.

But perhaps it will assist us in our investigations into this class of faults, as they are most liable to affect the usefulness and consistency of Christian character, to take the different forms or elements of which the class is composed. Of these we would mention the three following: I. The form of Procrastination; II. The form of Weariness in Well-doing; III. The form of a Defect in Energy and Zeal when we *do* right.

I. In a social, moral, and spiritual point of view, Procrastination is a sad and painful defect in the character of a Christian believer. It is a quality which strongly marks one whom it is difficult to trust—one in whose assistance and usefulness little confidence can be placed. Such a one, without being a hypocrite or a false friend, is constantly incurring the charge of misleading by broken promises, and incurring the charge of falsehood and insincerity by his unredeemed pledges. We suppose the case of one who makes a religious profession—who

is engaged in schemes of benevolence, and plans for doing good to the bodies and the souls of men. In that capacity, assurances are passed, and promises are made, of certain steps which are to be adopted for forwarding and advancing those undertakings; and all is done in perfect sincerity at the time, and with a full purpose of the promises being executed. But the habitual *indolence* of character comes in to mar the good effects; assurances come to nothing; promises are broken; difficulties arise;. ruin, even, to otherwise well-laid schemes may be the result. Men are then so disappointed and embittered that it might sometimes be difficult to estimate the evil which arises from the weakness and indecision of a good and otherwise pious character. How many plans of usefulness and of piety are marred or injured by this unfortunate evil of procrastination! How many good intentions have been frustrated—how many golden opportunities lost—by the apathy and delay which so often accompany indolence of character!

There is a class of faults arising from the indulgence of an indolent temperament in Christian believers to which we can only refer briefly, as frequently producing an example of defect in Christian duty: we mean those faults which proceed from want of due *energy* and *exertion*, in not correcting the evil over which men have it in their power to exercise an influence—what, in short, we may term that excessive and injurious good nature which springs out of a morbid shrinking which some have from giving pain to others, or causing disturbance to themselves. These are not faults into which men are

led for the gratification of passion, or by the revengeful and malignant impulses of their nature; they proceed from very different motives. They are consistent with kind dispositions and good feelings in men's hearts, but evince, at the same time, a weak and too easy spirit of compliance, which is frequently in opposition to their more mature judgment. From this want of decision and of firmness, parents shrink from correcting their children of faults in the early years of life—a dereliction of duty which so frequently bears to them and to their offspring such bitter fruits of misery, and shame, and disappointment! From this cause flows likewise, we fear, sometimes that unfaithfulness to the responsibility of pastoral duty which prevents Christian ministers from marking and rebuking with sufficient energy the misconduct of their flock—which restrains Christian believers from boldly testifying in society their disapproval of vice, their discountenance of impiety. The meek and placid gentleness of a Christian is unquestionably one of the choicest ornaments of a Christian spirit; but such a disposition must not lead men to the cowardly and indolent policy of conniving at what is essentially evil. The sincere Christian believer, whilst he exhorts and warns, is patient and forbearing with the *offender;* but it is the over-timid and indolent believer who gives, by his want of decision, an encouragement to his *offence.* In short, we must not mistake indifference and cowardice for charity and liberality of sentiment.

But now pass from consideration of its effect upon others to the religious effect upon men themselves. How

often, under the teaching and reading of the Holy Spirit of God, have men been deeply *impressed* with religious truth! They have been awakened to a sense of their shortcomings before God—with a desire for a closer walk with God—have felt that they should draw nearer to His Cross—to see Christ there—to behold in awe the agony He underwent, and in full determination to take up their own cross, and, for the future, more faithfully to follow the footsteps of Jesus, and more faithfully to act the part of a true follower and a sincere disciple. But they have delayed—procrastination has had its usual bad influence. The golden moment for decision is allowed to pass away—the force of the impression to exhaust itself. The world and the world's influence returns; and instead of renewed Christian life and spiritual revival —instead of an advancing course of new and heaven-ward aspiration—religion takes but the secondary and subordinate position in the heart. Men still talk of religion, and of their zeal for God, and of their religious impressions, and of what they *intend* to do, and of all that ought to be done by Christian men. But the day of action is always put off: with them, it is to-morrow, and to-morrow, and still to-morrow—till the error of seventeen becomes the confirmed failing of seventy. It is this which makes indolence or procrastination specially a fault of professing Christian characters—they are misled *because* they have made the resolution and had the desire to serve God. We have known persons who seemed to keep up the impressions of being religious characters, not by what they did, but by the promise of

what they *intended* to do. Their spiritual life was kept alive by good resolutions which were never completed; and it was this which led Dr Samuel Johnson to say that hell was paved with good resolutions—*i. e.*, good resolutions never put in practice. Scripture gives a remarkable example of the procrastination which is fatal to the religious character. Felix the governor sent for Paul, the apostle of the Nazarenes. He did not refuse to hear him; on the contrary, he heard him with emotion; for, as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix *trembled.* Surely such emotion implied a conviction of sin; and surely we may hope for some good results from a trembling anxiety such as Felix betrayed on hearing of the great and solemn obligations of doing righteously, of observing temperance, and of expecting a judgment to come? Alas, no! —the juncture *seems* favourable to penitence and piety. But there comes the fatal spirit of procrastination—Satan suggests the delusive plea, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will send for thee." To many that season never comes, as it never came to Felix; man resolves and re-resolves, then dies the same. Thus we may often see procrastination preventing the good resolution, or the religious impression, being acted upon or being brought practically into operation. We speak of minds under a degree of religious conviction—we speak of those who have put their foot upon the threshold of the heavenly temple, who have set their faces towards Zion, and who have yet allowed themselves to become the victims of a spirit of procrastination which

induces them to put off the vigorous resolve, and that at a time when not a moment was to be lost, and when all delay was dangerous. We had hoped a movement would be made for God and for His truth; but the Evil One gained such influence as to disappoint the angels waiting to rejoice in the heavenward movement.

II. But now we have to consider a second or more advanced step of the Christian believer when under the influence of the evil spirit of indolence. We are now to suppose him having gone further, and to have actually *chosen* the path that leadeth unto life. A decided position has been taken; we seem entitled now to expect the actual commencement of the Christian course; nay, the strait gate has been passed, the narrow way has been entered on. We hope that what has been auspiciously begun will be vigorously carried on, and the immortal crown be won. But, alas! in this case, although Paul has been heard, and the "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" which he preached have been acknowledged and received as elements of a new and higher life, still the warfare has been abandoned, the steps have soon been retraced, and the man has returned to the indulgences and follies of a world that passeth away. These are the cases where men have become weary in their well-doing. They are like the stony-ground hearers of our Lord's parable—they have grown up, but have brought no *fruit* to perfection. And yet this is a state of mind and condition of life which exhibits the shortcoming of many a Christian disciple. There really *was* a sincere profession of attachment to

the good cause—there was a determination to seek the kingdom of heaven, and resolutely to do the will of God; the beauty of holiness *had* been perceived and acknowledged; good resolutions had been formed; nay more, the good work was commenced, the better part was chosen, and the Christian life begun. What, then, was wanting?—where was the fault?—and why was the goodly prospect intercepted and darkened? The answer to these inquiries is, There was a want of *perseverance;* circumstances changed, fresh temptations to self-indulgence offered themselves, and the piety which marked the character of the Christian at one period of his course seemed to have been lost and dissipated before the trials and temptations of a new position. We have known good men who evidently suffered deterioration in their spiritual interests from the change of circumstances in which they were placed; and their declension from former piety and former observances of God's will and commandments have been to a certain degree concealed from their own spiritual discernment. There are Christians whose religious life may perhaps be described as a series of constant *beginnings;* they are always commencing something good—always entering a new course of godliness; and thus they are, in fact, showing forth a series of self-delusions, of weakness, and of backsliding. The laws and principles which contribute to the success of the religious life are very like the laws and principles which regulate success in common life—we mean the success of attaining the ends which are proposed. In ordinary life we hardly ever find a man

successful in the objects of his pursuit without perseverance, without determination in carrying forward those schemes which have been prudently devised and wisely undertaken. So the Christian pilgrim, if he is to gain success, must exercise self-denial; he must resist all solicitations of indolence, or of self-indulgence, to abandon the good part which he has once chosen. There is a delusion which leads men to be satisfied with the mere consciousness of having once really *begun* a good work for God's truth. The delusion is kept up in the mind of him who is so deceived, by his dwelling with complacency on the good which he *intended* to do, and the good which he actually commenced to do; and thus he becomes insensible to the folly and the guilt of falling away from what once was fairly begun. We know how Scripture deals with such cases. They are distinctly marked out, and there we have the clear and uncompromising assurance that "no man having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." For this also we have the solemn warning from Jesus himself, "Remember Lot's wife,"—*i. e.*, take a lesson from *her* example and *her* punishment. She perished, not for refusing *to go*, but for "looking back" in the path which God had marked out for her to pursue. Such believers are the stony-ground hearers of our Lord's own parable. The seed germinates, it grows up for a time, but, lacking moisture and nourishment at the root, it is scorched up, and withers away. And so is the unsettled and unstable follower of Christ: he goes on for a time, but the trials of self-indulgence, or tempta-

tion to do evil, or some tribulation on account of duty, arises, and—he falls away.

III. But now there is another and a very lamentable form of shortcoming in the Christian life which we are endeavouring to describe, and it is this: Christian believers are very common who have passed through the two phases of which we have already spoken, and so far have done better than those whom we have described. Their minds have been awakened to the awful importance of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; and they have not put away from them the convictions of conscience. They have not said, "Go thy way till a more convenient season," but they have followed up the impressions which, from the teaching of God's Holy Spirit, they have received. Those impressions have led them to make good resolutions, and to enter upon the service of Jesus. They have put their hand to the plough, and they have begun to follow Christ, and to declare themselves His disciples; nor have they looked back in the field, so as to spoil the furrow; nor have they gone away and left the Redeemer, and ceased to be with Jesus. What, then, is their error, and what is their shortcoming? Why are they to be included at all in the class of persons requiring such warnings as these remarks are intended to suggest? Their fault is this: they are not sufficiently in earnest—they want Christian Energy, they lack Zeal in what they do. They work, but they have not set themselves to the work heartily as to the Lord. They have satisfied themselves with too low a spiritual standard. They have a form of

godliness, and the form is perhaps accompanied with *some* power, but it is not sufficient power. They have chosen a better part, but it is rather a cold approval than a warm-hearted choice. They are turned towards Zion, and have begun the Christian life and journey, but the step is feeble and the progress slow. This form of religion is more a name to live than a true life. There may be much that is good, and pure, and innocent, but it lacks the fervour of a devoted and a loving heart. We have known such religion so formal, so calm, as to have no want but that of life. Like the beautiful and graceful figure cut on marble, it has all the outline of the finest of human features, but the statue does not breathe —it has the coldness of the tomb; "we start, for soul is wanting there." This is not the religion and service due to the heavenly Master—"Whatsoever for Him thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." This is not the Christian life of the apostolic lesson—"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Men may pride themselves upon the correctness of their faith and innocence of their life, but this want of diligence, energy, and power, must affect their claim of being God's faithful servants—may class them very near the servant against whom there went forth the heavy charge of not improving the talent committed to his keeping. Consider, for a moment, the ordinary figures and comparisons by which the life and labours of the true Christian are described and enforced. He is at one time a servant diligently doing his master's work in the household during that master's temporary

absence. Then again he is represented as a soldier—a warrior clad in a complete panoply of armour, offensive against evil passions, defensive against temptation of sin and Satan; and who maintains a constant fight against enemies. Again, the Christian believer is a *watchman*, constantly prepared, constantly on the look-out against the danger of a surprise, constantly in preparation against the attack of a foe whose coming is uncertain, against whose approach he must be always prepared. The Christian is also a competitor for a prize, and to gain this prize he is told that he must put forth all his energies, like the candidate in the race and the trial of strength—to run, to contend, to wrestle. He must train himself for the contest by self-denial, and by abstaining from all things which divert his attention or weaken his efforts. And all this the Christian competitor has to follow: he has to learn that without such self-denial, such watchfulness, such training, and such exertion, he can never hope to win the prize of the *Christian* contest, the seraph-crown of bliss, the diadem of immortal glory. It is in vain to attempt concealing from ourselves how many Christian characters there are in the world, sincere believers, respectable in conduct, reverent in feeling for God and sacred things, and who are yet of the class we are considering. There is a fault—the fault is coldness. The feeling of religious duties and obligations is pitched too low—the tone is of the "earth, earthy." We do not so much bring a charge of positive evil, as a suggestion that there is little of what is good beyond negative good in certain Christian believers. To such we are entitled

to say, "Be not deceived." Surely we may urge the *greatness* of the prize you contend for, as a motive for contending more earnestly? Surely we may well remind you how gracious, how warm, is that divine and parental love for which you make a return so ungracious and so cold? Have we not too much reason to fear that the description given of old of the state of the church at Laodicea may apply to many of our own time—to many amongst ourselves? Listen to those warning words. This was to be written to the angel of the church at Laodicea: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I *would* that thou *wert* cold or hot."

In this address from the great Head of the Church, there is no charge of gross or profligate conduct on the part of those Laodiceans. They are not accused of blasphemy, of apostasy, or of rebellion against God and His commands. The charge is, that they are neither hot nor cold—in one word, indifferent; and such indifference is evidently hateful to God, for what is the wish expressed by Him who "liveth and was dead, and who is alive for evermore?"—"I would that thou wert cold *or* hot." Better either extreme than such negative sign of a spiritual existence. If hot, we should then know that there was life, and if burning wildly, it might be moderated and rendered useful; if cold, then there might be hope that a coldness which sprang from ignorance or misconception might, under better teaching and happier auspices, warm into life and vigour. But this state of

neither hot nor cold is deceitful, useless, and practically valueless. Enough of heat to show that there is the responsibility of knowledge,—enough of cold to show that if there is a form of godliness, it has no power—that it is dead and helpless.

Such remarks, we know, are often met with expressed fears of fanaticism, with enlarged details of the evils of enthusiasm, the advantages of a calm and rational piety, a subdued and moderated fervour of devotion. Alas! that men should deceive themselves. Will God accept INDIFFERENCE—indifference in devotional offerings—indifference in service or in duty? Enthusiasm may do much, although there be in it some danger of excess. Fanaticism may err and be extravagant, but it may have the energy of truth, though misdirected. It *professes* to follow what is the right path, and may at last be reduced to reason. But of indifference what *can* come? O let not its withering, palsying hand be ever laid upon the Christian's heart! There is a religious lukewarmness which can hear the truth into which angels desire to look, and remain unmoved. There is a torpor which can handle sacred things, and no spark of spiritual light or heat be communicated, to stimulate into life and action. Why did the Holy Ghost descend upon the early Church with the appearance of cloven tongues as of FIRE? Surely it was because it is the blessed office of that divine Spirit not only to enlighten the Church of Christ, to direct and guide the steps of all her children in the right path, but at the same time to "lighten with celestial fire"—to warm, to invigorate, and to cheer her

efforts. Let it be always remembered that nothing can compensate in the Christian character for the spiritual indolence and religious indifference of which we speak; no negative goodness or mere abstinence from evil—no exercise of good natural affections or kindly feelings between men—can be a compensation. We have said that the loving or affectionate disposition of the Christian character is most likely to harbour this defect—that those who are conscious of a loving and kindly feeling, of a gentle deportment of character, are most likely to be lulled with the thought that all is right—that for them no battle need be fought, no warfare need be waged. They rather *give way* to apathy, than *pursue* what is wrong, and, according to the natural dictates of their disposition, shrink from any prominent place in the battle of the faith. But then there are for the Christian pilgrim and for the soldier of the Cross seasons of contention and of labour in the field, as well as hours of repose and quiet by the still waters of peace and love. There is a time when he has to call forth the soul to strive, as well as a time to call forth the heart to love; and assuredly, if we are followers of our Lord and of His apostles, we cannot reckon upon a long indulgence in the indolence and indifference which seek only for repose and rest. No; there is a work to do, there is a spiritual enemy to meet in a struggle for pre-eminence. Oftentimes in the Christian's course he must feel that he is to be up and doing; nay, that there is even a right hand to be cut off and a right eye to be plucked out—*i. e.*, a passion or a wish dear as a right eye, valued as a right

hand, with which he has to part—for the glory of God and the eternal good of his own soul, as he treads the path which his blessed Master trode before, when He passed from the Cross below to the Crown above;—*that*, we may be quite assured, is not to be done successfully in the spirit of indifference or of indolence.

CHAPTER III.

FAULTS OF INTOLERANCE FREQUENT IN BELIEVERS WHO PURSUE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

We have now considered various faults belonging to the class of Indolence or indecision, which we found not infrequently in the characters of those who made a profession of religion. Under the influence of faults of this character, men find their good resolutions too often rendered abortive, their minds turned away from a course of piety apparently well begun, or the indolent spirit so pervading and influencing the *whole* Christian character, that its energies for God's service are rendered tame, irresolute, and lukewarm.

But we turn now to a class of faults which are quite different from this in their nature and operation, inasmuch as they lead to quite different results. The indolent class of faults imply too *little* enthusiasm, too little energy and animation in carrying forward the different questions with which the Christian believer is conversant. The class of faults with which we have to deal on the present occasion implies rather the error of too much

than of too little energy. The fault we have now to discuss is an exaggerated action on one branch of Christian duty. It is not now a *want* of zeal which we have to condemn, so much, perhaps, as of an over-zeal; but then it is over-zeal, not on religion generally, which we would say is hardly possible, but over-zeal upon certain favourite points, the effect of which is to destroy the balance of the Christian character. It is not to discourage the exercise of zeal in any Christian cause, but of zeal misdirected or partially applied, that we take up the question in this form. We have not so much to give the Christian believer this negative direction, "These things ye ought *not* to have done;" but certainly, whilst admitting that those things might be done, or should be done, we are called upon at the same time to add the supplementary remonstrance, "but ye should not have left others *undone*." We may have failed in precisely expressing our meaning as to this portion of our subject. It is indeed difficult to describe, as an abstract question, this class of faults of Christian believers, and often of Christian believers of great attainments in Christian godliness.* We shall, therefore, now proceed to give *examples* of the cases in which good men may err on these points, and we shall endeavour to illustrate as we go on, the evils which often arise to the Church and to individuals from an extra-

* It should be observed, that without taking up *erroneous* principles, we are constantly finding a fault, apparent in even the best of men, arising from their wanting a little *more* or a little *less* to make the whole character harmonious and complete.

vagant and ill-directed spirit of activity, or what we have proposed to describe as FAULTS OF PARTIAL ZEAL OR INTOLERANCE.

We have described this chapter as dealing with faults which we *frequently* found in Christian believers. They arise from the very fact of men being deeply in earnest as to their belief. They are faults which may easily attach to those who are earnestly pursuing the Christian life and making a Christian profession.

I. The first example which we shall adduce of the fault or class of faults which we have now to explain and endeavour to correct, applies to the doctrines of our holy faith, and to the manner in which they are sometimes maintained and defended. No doubt, at first sight, and before due examination and reflection, there may be the *semblance* of an opposition or contrariety between certain doctrines, each of which holds a prominent position in the Gospel of our Lord. At any rate, partial, injudicious, and extreme statements *may* be made upon some points, which will bring them into an apparently unnatural collision; and this is the very fault of many good persons—a fault which it is our humble endeavour to point out and to correct. For example, on one hand take that which we believe to be a doctrine of Holy Scripture, and a doctrine also clearly expressed in the formularies of our own Church; we mean the doctrine of justification by faith only, without the deeds of the law. Take the doctrine with all its obvious and natural accompaniments: the utter hopelessness of procuring pardon and acceptance from God (even in the best of men) on the ground of merit

or deserving,—that as matter of claim or right we cannot stand for one instant on the plea of our services and deservings: "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight;" "By grace are ye saved, through faith; . . . not of works, lest any man should boast." Such expressions are numerous and precise. On the other hand, we have a teaching of Scripture no less distinct and no less authoritative, on the importance or the necessity of a holy and a virtuous life, not as a general or abstract question, but as a matter of practical importance and minute detail. We have the instructions and requirements of the *moral* law, and exhortations to that holiness of life and conduct "without which no man shall see the Lord;" and we have the most solemn assurance that to enter the kingdom of Christ is not by saying "Lord, Lord," but by *doing* His will. And to go no further in such representation, take the sentence at the last day, where the direct and immediate reason assigned for the acceptance of the righteous is, because they had fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked, afforded a home to the stranger, and visited the afflicted in sickness and in captivity. The direct and immediate reason for rejecting the condemned, is their *not* having done those things to Christ's poorer brethren, and therefore having not done them to Himself. Of course we know these statements to be quite consistent with each other, and in fact our expositions of Holy Scripture frequently are occupied with explaining their harmony, and showing how they mutually enforce and assist each other. But what we would now remark

is, the fault of those who maintain one side of the doctrine in so exaggerated a manner as to make it *seem* hostile to the other; that persons of sanguine temperament and partial apprehension of divine truth, viewing one statement as of more importance than the other, or being jealous for the honour and observance of a doctrine which they consider has been by others contravened or disparaged, will sometimes advance particular doctrines so exclusively as virtually to endanger the due place and authority of others—and it has been the error of good men. Thus, in the instance before us, some writers and preachers have dwelt so frequently, so exclusively, on the doctrine of justification by faith, as to make it appear almost as if they undervalued or were afraid of good works, and almost to loosen the obligation to a moral and a virtuous life—that essential element of gospel truth. On the other hand, good men, feeling for the honour and the integrity of Christian morals, have so pressed the importance of good works *in themselves*, and so little referred their action and their value to the higher doctrines of grace, as to give a seeming sanction to the notion that Christianity is only a purer system of morals, and that by his works shall man not only be judged hereafter at the last day, but may be justified before God in this state by a careful and a diligent obedience. Each view, when thus taken singly, and as if *opposed* to the other, leads good and zealous men into error. The one esteems too lightly the office of Jesus as our teacher and example, the other loses the full estimation of His office as our High Priest and substitute. The

one may come to think too lowly of human virtue, the other may put the Law so forward as to supersede the Gospel.

We may adduce another example of conflict of views and representations of Christian doctrines. Thus we have the momentous and all-important truth of God's omnipotence revealed to us in conjunction with His omniscience and wisdom, under which great attributes He is the sole Governor of the universe, and the entire Disposer of all its concerns. Hence His foreknowledge of all that exists—His necessary permission of all that is done. Hence His universal and unexceptional providence, by which not a sparrow falleth to the ground without His knowledge—not a movement takes place in creation, from the motion of a planet in its orbit to the flutter of an insect's wing. Together with this great conclusion, in which revelation accords with the dictates of natural reason, we have also an assurance of certain free agency and responsibility in human nature. At any rate, man is *addressed* as choosing for himself between good and evil—he is spoken to as a Being certainly bringing on himself his own destruction—certainly, too, as able to give that obedience which is enjoined, and also able to show the rebellion against God's law against which he is warned. Thus the Prophet, in Jehovah's name, asks the people of God, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" The apostle exhorts his disciples to receive not the grace of God in vain—neither to resist nor grieve the Holy Spirit of God,—all implying the responsibility of a free agent. But keen and ardent

disputants, sincere in their desire for truth, and really feeling the anxieties which they profess, and really dreading a too great preponderance being given to one or other of those views, have pushed the *other* side to an extreme which endangers the balance of truth, as regards the agency of God and the free-will of man —the disputant on the one side almost losing sight of human action and human responsibility altogether, in his assertion of spiritual supremacy; while his opponent appears inclined almost to *supersede* spiritual aid in his representation of human responsibility. We see, then, how easy it is on points of doctrine for good men to err, not because they are wanting in energy—(indeed they err rather because they are too energetic; but then it is a one-sided energy, a zeal too exclusive)—but because they sacrifice one Christian truth to another, when each should be maintained, and each permitted a free and full exercise and influence.

II. But we may trace a like error in men's views regarding what is due to the *polity* or external form of government and worship of the Church. We hold it quite deducible from Scripture, as a mere historical question, that there was from the beginning of the Church a threefold order of ministry—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. The argument which traces Diocesan Episcopacy from its first commencement and primitive elements under apostles—under Timothy, Titus, the Seven Angels of the Church in Asia Minor, and the disciples and apostles, up to its full development, so soon as the numbers and circumstance of the Church

admitted of it—has been wrought out with such learning, such ability, and such candour, as to appear quite convincing and satisfactory. But then we must allow that men of learning, candour, and ability have questioned the conclusion, and that of such some do not find in Scripture and the early Church the same authority for Episcopacy, or the order of the Church, or at any rate do not see that there is any *injunction* upon the subject —that though it may be lawful, yet it is not of exclusive *obligation*. All, however, are ready to admit that there are doctrines and precepts of our holy faith which do not admit of any question that would involve a doubtful obligation. The Trinity—the Divinity of our Lord—the Godhead and personal nature of the Holy Spirit—the atonement, the resurrection, ascension, and advent of Christ to judgment—the great rules of peace, piety, charity, purity, and holiness, are truths written on the page of Scripture as with a sunbeam. They clearly belong to those great Christian truths which go to form the materials for that solemn and awful declaration of the Word of God, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Now it cannot for a moment be maintained, that a like importance—we mean, of course, vital and saving importance—is attached in Holy Scripture to the external forms of polity by which the Church is to be governed, and the order and succession of its ministers secured. But then we find good men—men zealous for the honour of God—conscientious and benevolent men —who would absolutely limit the Gospel scheme of

mercy and salvation to the possession of this *external* form of Church polity, and this succession of Christian ministers. Surely there must be something wrong here! Surely that man's own religion must have some sad departure from the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who can calmly and deliberately exclude from eternal bliss sincere followers of the Lord Jesus Christ —the pure in heart—the humble and the lowly who fear God—the benevolent and the charitable, who, like their blessed Master, are going about doing good—all condemned and placed amongst outcasts and aliens from the grace and mercy of Christ, simply because they are not members of a Church wherein the ministry, the polity, and order, are of the Episcopal succession? The question comes to this, Who are those recognised by Christ as His true followers and disciples? Who are those whom His grace enables to bring forth the fruits of holiness? It is very much a question of fact. For as our Lord himself declared, "By their fruits ye shall know them," are these fruits confined to those who are under a particular form of Church government? Do we find the members of Episcopal Churches exclusively in possession of that faith and holiness, of that devotional spirit, and that superiority to worldliness, that elevation above all selfish and impure motives to action, which so clearly mark the man whose heart is right with God—whose foot is on the path that leads to God, and to the bliss and purity which are in His presence for evermore —whose heart and hand are ever open to pity, and to relieve *generously* the wants of others? And yet, for-

getting all this, there are good men who would limit the means of grace to the Episcopal Church—who would confine the hopes of glory to a Church where there is a succession of ministers traced, or supposed to be traced, up to the apostolic times. It is a painful violation of Christian charity. It is a fearful assumption of that divine attribute, the attribute of judgment, which is claimed as the privilege of God himself, and under which we are expressly commanded to judge nothing before the time. And we are so commanded, because God hath declared, "Vengeance is *mine;* I will repay, saith the Lord." For us to pass such condemnation is to forget that there are in the Gospel scheme of mercy questions even *more* important than those of Church polity and Episcopal succession. Important as we believe such to be, there are questions of Christian faith, hope, and charity, to *promote*, which the constitution of a church is appointed, but for which no church privileges can be a substitute. Many are more disposed to condemn a deviation from the one than to admire a conformity with the other. We mention this spirit as occasionally a fault of good men. But it is a fault of minds who have not well considered what spirit they are of. It is a fault of those who have adopted too much the tone of a narrow sectarianism, as opposed to the enlarged and free spirit of the Gospel.

It would be difficult to estimate the exact degrees of *sinfulness*, or of actual spiritual danger, which intolerance may assume in the Christian believer's character. But there can be no doubt of its being a serious fault,

and a great drawback to his due progress in a humble Christian walk. It were, indeed, an ungraceful quality in one who needs so much mercy for himself, to judge and to condemn his brethren. St Paul places this question on its proper footing when he speaks of his own commission in the ministry *in conjunction with* the essential quality of the religion that ministry was constituted to diffuse. "Who also," he writes, "hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the spirit giveth life, but the letter killeth." The commission is given, not for the purpose of confining the labour of those commissioned to a formal, technical, and verbal system of Christian ordinances, but in the larger and more diffusive SPIRIT of Gospel love and mercy to mankind. To receive a ministry thus exclusively in the letter would be to kill Christian love—to receive it in the spirit would be to give it life and animation for all. How was that Gospel proclaimed by an angelic anthem in the sky? How were the benefits and blessings of Christ's birth announced by the heavenly choir? It was declared to be "Glory to God, peace on earth, goodwill to man." Then think how it must lower and narrow the spirit of that glorious song, for man to add to it, and as if he were to say:—But this glory to God, peace on earth, goodwill to man, are not for all who shall love and reverence the child born at Bethlehem as a Saviour, "which is Christ the Lord," but are only really to be wrought out in hearts who have been trained in one form of church polity and church order! It would be shocking to follow out all the consequences

of so limited a view of the grace and goodness of our God. The great error committed by many good and zealous people, in this case, is the want of a clear distinction between the divine purposes in dealing with the Church as a body or a community instituted for preserving and propagating the Gospel of Christ in the world, and His dealings with *individuals* as regards their personal salvation. Grace is promised to mankind through a ministry, a church polity, and sacraments preserved and administered through their means. We have in our Church that form of Church polity which we believe to be scriptural, apostolic, and primitive, free from the unauthorised additions by which it has elsewhere been corrupted, and without those shortcomings by which it has elsewhere been curtailed. With our feelings and convictions, we rejoice in such a privilege. Personally, no clergyman of our Church could have ministered, as a Christian pastor, under any other commission. Nor could any lay member of that Church, where he had a choice, hold full communion with any Christian body or Church otherwise constituted. But then we dare not limit or confine the operations of grace to ourselves. We cannot say how He may deal with *individuals* differently taught, and feeling differently from ourselves. If it be declared by inspired lips, that God is "no respecter of persons"—that the prayers and alms of Cornelius, the Roman soldier, were accepted of God—that the heathen, "having not the law, are a law unto themselves;"—surely those who have not known, or have mistaken, the true theory and constitution of an

external Church, may be saved by grace given to their earnest and humble prayers? The Anglican Church is, no doubt, a branch of Christ's holy universal Church. We believe her doctrines to be sound and scriptural—her worship elevating and pure—her sacraments and ordinances, means and channels of grace and pardon; and we glory in the long line of holy men and sincere confessors who have been trained up under her teaching, and who have passed from her communion on earth to seats of rest and peace above. Nay, more than this, we deplore the departure from Episcopal order and Liturgical service as a great error, and the source and centre of many evils in the Christian world. But can we shut our eyes to the fact, that Christians of other denominations, members of churches or communities without Bishops, have also, under divine aid, fought a good fight, kept the faith, finished a Christian and devoted course below, to inherit the promises above? Take a short list of such Christian characters not found in our Church, or belonging to an Episcopal communion. Take only those of our own countrymen—Baxter, Howe, Owen, Doddridge, Watts, John Wesley, Whitfield—Carey, father and son, the missionaries—our own missionary Schwartz—J. Foster, R. Hall, Thomas Chalmers. Look at these names (and the list might be greatly extended), eminent and distinguished for all that we value in Christian piety and Christian attainments—names of men whose lives and writings have been evidently blessed of God for instructing their fellow-creatures, raising the devotion of Christian worshippers, converting the erring,

turning many careless souls to righteousness, gently comforting the doubting, and ably refuting the infidel. Let any earnest Christian believer try the matter by a simple reference to his own experience, and judge by his own feelings, after he has consulted volumes of eloquence and Christian wisdom by nonconformist authors—after following the sublime strain of Milton's sacred song, and been raised to scenes of heaven's worship by "Milton's seraph fire"—after joining in God's house in singing some of those sacred strains which will never cease from Christian worship, whether such hymns as those of Doddridge, "Thine early Sabbaths, Lord, we love," suited to a thanksgiving for the Sunday; or, "Hark, the herald angels sing," suitable for Christmas; or, "My God, and is Thy table spread?" suited for celebration of Holy Communion;—or whether, in devout contemplation of Jesus dying for us, we join in the hymn of Watts, "When I survey the wondrous cross;"—or when, in trembling hope of divine assurance, we raise the hymn,—

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes;"—

or with Logan, in the beautiful paraphrase, we are reminded of our fleeting mortality through the touching and solemn address,—

"Few are thy days, and full of woe,
O man, of woman born!
Thy doom is written, 'Dust thou art,
And shalt to dust return.'"

After such exercises as these, will you be disposed to say, The grace of God and the spirit of devotion go not with any who conform not with our Church?

We are quite prepared to assert that an *opposite* fault is committed also by good and zealous Christian men. They undervalue the importance of the question of Church Polity,—they entertain unworthy and illiberal prejudices against our Church system,—and do not sufficiently estimate the weight of Scripture authority for the lawfulness, if not for the obligation, of Episcopal government. They commit a fault also in their refusal to admit the expediency, value, and suitableness of such a form for promoting Christian edification in individuals, and Christian peace and order in the body. Our own duty in this matter may perhaps be thus stated: The truly grateful and humble Christian Churchman will value his Church, and love his Church, and honour and support it, on the ground of its scriptural, apostolical, and primitive character. But he will deny the grace of God to none who seek earnestly to know the truth as it is in Jesus. He will respect and love every fellow-creature whom he sees following Christ, and bearing after Him a cross of patience and self-denial, walking with God in piety and humble desire to do His service; and he will wait for the great God to judge. He will at any rate decline passing *any* sentence of his own; and those who condemn others, and who withhold from them in their hearts the grace of a good and gracious Father, should well consider the awful assurance, "*He* shall have judgment *without* mercy that hath showed no mercy."

III. But once more, we think the fault of a one-sided zeal, and of an undue exaltation of one Christian truth, is frequently made manifest in matters of ritual, by Christian believers otherwise anxious to live the Christian or spiritual life. There can be no question on this point, that, constituted as man *has* been constituted by his Maker, of a body and a soul, a material and an immaterial or spiritual portion, he must be framed for receiving mental impressions through the external organs, and from sensible objects. It must be of importance, therefore, to have the worship of Almighty God so conducted as shall, on this principle, be productive of devotional and elevating impressions. "Let all things be done decently and in order," and let them be "done to edifying," is the rule or direction given by an inspired apostle; and it is in accordance with this teaching that the forms of *our* public worship have been conceived—sufficient of outward ceremonial to engage and fix the attention—enough of form to lead men by external symbols to the blessed and important facts and doctrines of our most holy faith. In times past this seems to have been lost sight of, or at any rate neglected. Whether afraid of formalism, or from indolence, or parsimony, or careless indifference, certainly our arrangements for Church services had some time back become unworthy of the dignity of God's house—cold and barren, unsuited to the solemnity and sacredness of His immediate worship. In our days there has been a reaction in an opposite direction. A love of ritual for its own sake seems to have come in—a poor attempt to make our services

imitate the gorgeous ceremonial of the Church of Rome; and in celebrating the most holy of Christian rites—the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ—to make our simple ritual of its administration resemble as closely as possible the pomp and grandeur and mystic awe of a pontifical high mass. We deprecate these extremes, as being both in contravention of the apostolic rule, which inculcates decency and order, but at the same time requires that all things shall be done to edification. We grieve to see a tame and unseemly outward manifestation in celebrating Christian worship and Christian mysteries; but we do equally fear the poor attempt to give a Romish character to an Anglican service. In one case there may be danger of losing sight of the realities of Christian doctrine in mere abstractions; in the other, of exalting the form of godliness till we lose our hold of its *power*, and incur that fatal error under which we substitute signs for the things signified, and the means of enforcing truth for the truth itself.

Now, from these examples which we have given of mistakes which may attend exaggerated views of certain subjects, as connected either with the DOCTRINES, the POLITY, or the RITUAL of our Church, it will at once be apparent that it may be a fault which will adhere to earnest and good men. They push a favourite opinion into an undue importance, not because they are *indifferent* to religious truth, but really because they entertain most sincere opinions of its importance, and because they have persuaded themselves that others have not done those

opinions justice, but have allowed them to be overpowered by the prominency of some *other* opinions. The error of which we speak will more naturally come to be a fault of the class of character we have named as the Intellectual. Men may reason themselves (when they trust to their own reason) into any exaggeration of opinion—their sentiments become, as it were, their own offspring, and are viewed with an exclusive partiality which places them out of their proper sphere, and destroys their just relations to other portions of Christian truth. Speculative minds sometimes reason themselves into the extremes of opinion, and have not strength of mind to take in more ideas than one. Hence we would say of the character before us, it is deficient in its due balance or equilibrium. Particular opinions preponderate in the minds of those who bear it. The charge of Festus against St Paul may occasionally have some ground. With inferior and less carefully guarded men, much learning *may* make them, upon favourite and speculative points, if not "mad," certainly unreasonable and extravagant. Christianity, as a scheme or system of religious and moral teaching, is a great and harmonious whole—each part and portion has its proper place, its proper and legitimate importance. To put forth too prominently any Christian truth, so as to encroach upon the position and influence of any other Christian truth, is a fault, and it is the very fault which a character who has a turn for arguing and refining might be apt to commit. Every truth which is connected with our holy faith is important—beautiful and edifying in its own place.

But then it should be carefully *kept* in its own place, and not usurp the place which SHOULD be held by *other* truths. This implies, as we have said, a character in which the use and importance of various truths are nicely balanced—a very rare character—a character to which we can hardly expect more than an approximation, and of which we scarcely ever see the full and unclouded perfection. From the revealed word of God—from the dictates of our own consciences—from the teaching of our natural affections—and from the conclusions of scholars and divines—how many and how varied are the impressions which we receive, and which we receive as eternal truths in unison with the will of God, and as consonant with the peculiarities of our own nature! And these truths must have agreement with each other, if they agree with the eternal standard of truth. But still, no doubt, we may sometimes seem perplexed, and unable to reconcile apparent discrepancies; at least, it may be, unable to discern an entire unity between them. And yet we must take along with us *all* the parts and portions of divine truth. For thus to perceive and secure the harmony which pervades them all, is the great triumph and the high reward of a chastened and a humble reception of God's word. To be deaf to that harmony, and to give undue prominency to particular portions of truth, however important in themselves, is a fault, and a grevious fault, although it be found in the breast of the servant of God, who would, if needful, give his body to be burned for the cause of Christ, and who is ready, if called upon by duty, to bestow *all* his goods

to feed the poor. We are fully aware of the importance of this subject—of its delicacy and its difficulty. We had therefore, perhaps, better conclude with a personal application of the principle which we have been following out, in a plain rule for our practical direction amongst the many opinions and statements which are brought before us.

Whenever we perceive the importance of any truth in our own minds, and feel disposed to give it a too prominent or exclusive position in our own creed, we should balance that preponderance by drawing our attention to *other* truths of God's word which we feel in danger of being overlooked or thrown into the shade. Then we shall have some pledge and assurance of our safe course. We need not fear, for example, to receive the strongest conclusions on the subject of justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law, provided we keep in due prominency, and give full authority to the revealed declarations, that faith without works is *dead*, and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Have no fear to cast all your care upon God, and trust implicitly to His protection, if, at the same time, you relax not your own endeavours, and withhold not your own labour in the cause. Be zealous for your own Church. Rejoice that your lot is cast in a Church organised under the polity of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon, and humbly thank God for your privileges of scriptural doctrine, apostolical government, and pure worship. But remember that Charity, which is greater than faith and hope, will survive Episcopacy. And oh! never doubt or question

that "holiness, clear undoubted holiness, in the individual, is an infallible mark of true incorporation into Christ—of membership with the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and of a virtual enrolment in the estimate of our merciful God, among the baptised innocents of His correspondent earthly kingdom."* Where the love of ritual is prominent in the heart—whether from the associations of early life or from natural tastes and constitutional temperament—you need have no fear of bad consequences, or of any dangerous results, so *long* as the feeling is kept in due subordination, and rightly balanced by a deep and serious impression of the utter worthlessness of all service and all offerings that are separate from the service of the heart. We may cherish the hope that the decencies and proprieties of our worship are not unacceptable offerings, but we must also believe that "obedience is better than sacrifice," and that the simple prayer of the humble and penitent spirit far surpasses in the sight of God the most gorgeous ritual and the most costly offerings. In these times we have often a perplexing path to tread, a difficult choice to make. Many good and earnest-minded persons are around us, urging on our notice, and pressing on our acceptance, particular opinions, favourite conclusions, extreme views on some part of Christian faith and practice. Take a calm and serious view of the *whole* scheme and system of divine truth—realise Christianity as a great, and glorious, and heavenly whole, and then pray

* Archer Butler of Dublin.

earnestly that you may give obedience to every part. It was a memorable and a wise declaration of the Psalmist, "O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto ALL Thy commandments."

CHAPTER IV.

FAULTS OF COVETOUSNESS OFTEN ADHERE TO CHRISTIANS DURING THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

We propose in this chapter to consider a class of faults often found to linger in the hearts of professing Christian believers, retarding their spiritual advancement in the inner life, and forming a drawback to their religious character. These may be placed under the general description of faults connected with covetousness, or a too great love of money. It is a very comprehensive class, and operates unfavourably in many ways upon men's conduct, and assumes many forms of development in their hearts. Thus we find Christian men, and men of high religious views and aspirations, tainted with a degree of covetousness quite inconsistent with their general profession. It is shown in a backwardness to contribute according to their abilities towards schemes of a charitable, a church-extension, or a missionary character. It is shown in their being generally too anxious and too careful about money, allowing a love of wealth to check their better feelings, and to interfere with the full success

of many great plans for good which require their pecuniary aid. In short, we have to speak of that over-love of money which prevents men from parting with it for schemes of piety and mercy, for schemes which they have themselves pronounced to be for man's good and God's honour. Now we have already observed of all such faults as those which we have before us, that they partake of a DECEITFUL nature, not always detected nor always seen in their true light by those in whom they are found to dwell, but ever ready to assume some appearance of what is *right*, and to bear some resemblance to a virtue. For this self-deceit and false appearance of covetousness several reasons might be assigned; as, for example,—1. It is a natural bias of the human mind—a bias strengthened and corroborated by all early habits and associations, to place too high a value upon money, and to attach great importance to the possession of such an agency. Money is supposed to be the representative of all things desirable upon the earth. We have all been so accustomed to consider it as power, that to possess money is considered as having in our grasp everything that money can purchase. And how many harbour the belief that there is nothing which money *cannot* purchase? Hence a sort of idolatry of money becomes a common failing, not merely of narrow-minded, worldly, and unspiritualised characters, but of many who should know better and look higher. Even where there is prodigality and a lavish spirit of extravagance, still you find the value for money show itself in acts of avarice, and even of dishonesty. An over-estimate of wealth, therefore, as

the great earthly good, is not confined to inferior minds, or to men of grovelling propensities. Nay, how often has it been the failing of really *great* minds? And as it has frequently shaded the man of lofty intellect and powerful grasp of understanding, we cannot wonder to find it occasionally lurking as a fault of the ordinary Christian believer, and forming an alloy of the Christian character generally. This is a fault too, and a failing, which we fear rather grows than diminishes with advancing years. Avarice is the special fault of age, and even without absolute avarice the love of money frequently survives all other passions and desires. His wealth is the last idol which is torn from man's heart, and often retains its place of solitary worship. We may expect, therefore, as we have said, to find this lingering remnant of the natural man cleaving to many who are no strangers to higher and more spiritual attainments.

2. There is another plausible reason for the indulgence. Covetousness may easily so far assume the air and appearance of a virtue, as quite to satisfy the scruples of its votaries. The spirit which the Christian teacher or the stern moralist may call a covetous spirit, and the covetousness which *they* denominate idolatry, may be passed off by him who would deceive himself as right economy; and economy, under some circumstances at least, is a virtue.

3. Then, again, covetousness and a covetous spirit are deceitful, because, as we have already said in the case of indolence, they do not directly involve a charge of anything gross or immoral in the conduct of him who

has been found to practise them—they involve no coarse or unbecoming indulgence, no rude or violent ebullition of human passion—they attack no one's rights or comforts—they bear nothing openly offensive on their face, and though the world may see the failing in a Christian character, still it eludes the notice of him who is its victim. Men put away from themselves the idea of blame, and rather complacently than severely judge their conduct, wanting, as it may be, in the open and generous spirit of Christian liberality, under the old plea of their obeying an imperative call to duty—viz., the claim of provision for a family and for the necessities of their own advancing age. We are assured, therefore, that this is a class of faults against which many Christian believers should keep guard, and carefully watch their own hearts. Some are by natural disposition or constitutional tendency more in danger than others. The persons whom we have described in "The Diversities of Christian Character" as the *practical* type, may be more likely to fall short in the spirit of Christian liberality — not, of course, necessarily so; nor does covetousness come of it naturally, but it is a result which we can easily believe *may* follow. The strict calculating and rigid application of practical tests of conduct may certainly tend to stifle the finer emotions of generosity, and to check the impulses of a free and liberal disposition to give. Hence, with noble exceptions, men who have made their own fortunes often lack the spirit of an enlarged charity. Practical men are men of prudence; as such, they will often pause and calculate before they give;

and he who pauses long and calculates closely, may soon bring his mind into the state that he will hardly give at all. It is very desirable, therefore, that we should consider well and carefully the whole question; and, whilst we detect and analyse the motives to the love of money, and to the covetousness which lurks within the deep recesses of the human mind, and which come forth in ways and forms of which we are not always ourselves aware, we should examine how far we are liable to their bad influence upon our Christian character, and upon the duties which we owe to our fellow-creatures and to God. Now this must be admitted by all; no duty has been more clearly laid down in Holy Scripture than the duty of making an offering to God of a portion of those worldly goods with which He has Himself been pleased to favour us. It is the Christian's duty to *give back*, as it were, to Him and to His service, of all that he has, a thank-offering, or acknowledgment for the remainder.

We shall therefore now inquire into the motives for that love of money, or covetous tendency, which *prevents* the full development of this portion of the Christian character, and endeavour to ascertain what it is that acts against that noble and generous principle of grateful acknowledgment of the creature to the Creator—that address of the humble dependent to the great and beneficent Lord and Master of the universe—"All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee!"

In examining into this question, therefore, there are, we think, THREE causes which we may fairly consider as the usual motives to covetousness, or that love of money

which exceeds the limits of what is just and reasonable. But before we enter more particularly into these three causes, there is a preliminary observation which we would make, because it may be necessary to correct an erroneous impression, often entertained upon this question, which is this: Many persons associate notions of avarice as something necessarily belonging to *great* possessions. When they think of misers, it is of men with hoards of wealth—of those who have to deal with vast accumulations of property. But the spirit of covetousness, which leads to an over-value and over-love of money, is independent of *amount*. A poor man may make an idol of his little just as much as the rich man makes an idol of his much. We know from our blessed Lord's own declaration how the poorest person may exceed in *charity and liberality* the richest; and that is by giving more than the wealthy in proportion to the whole that is in his possession. So, in like manner, a poor man may be *more* COVETOUS than a wealthy man, because he may *keep back* from the treasury of God more in proportion to his all than the rich man keeps back from *his* all. *If* the Christian character is debased and heaven is lost by such indulgence of covetousness, as to make the man an idolater of mammon, it is of little consequence whether the heart be set on an idol of gold or an idol of clay.

1. Of the three causes, then, which foster the spirit of covetousness, the first is, we apprehend, the case of persons who desire money, not that they may keep it, or hoard it, or delight themselves with its possession, but

simply that they may *spend* it. Men of selfish and self-indulgent dispositions—men of luxurious and dissipated habits—are keenly and earnestly bent upon having money, that they may have the gratification which its possession is supposed to confer; and hence it is not an uncommon circumstance to find a strange mixture of *avarice* and extravagance, of penuriousness and prodigality, associated in the same character. All this is bad, and shows a heart devoted to what is mere sensual gratification—a disposition in which the motives and influences of gospel truth are without effect. We do not, however, enumerate such tendency of the desires, or such practical development of the covetous spirit, as belonging to faults lurking in the hearts of Christian believers; they are rather an index of a character which has *no* spiritual designs at all—a character of the "earth, earthy." But there *is* a covetousness about money, a desire to procure, and a sharpened ingenuity for getting it from others, which *does* too often attach itself to the religious character. Many good men too eagerly and earnestly desire to have command of money, and show restless anxiety about its coming in, although they desire it for the purpose of employing it in doing good. The love of money may therefore be a passion strong and deep-seated in the heart of one far removed from that love of it which lies in the heart of the worldly man, because *this one* loves money as the instrument, not for sensual gratification, but for promoting missionary, charitable, and benevolent operations. Still even here may lurk some earthly feeling, some human weakness.

Men may, in their religious schemes and managements, attend too much to the pecuniary agency—they may be too confident in the power of money—trusting too little to grace, and dependent too little on the divine promises of a blessing on those who commit their cause to God.

2. But, secondly, there is another form in which the love of money, or the covetous spirit, may be developed, and developed remarkably, in the minds of Christian believers, and which must be watched with great care, because, as we have said, there is ground for self-deception and delusion,—we mean where the sentiment assumes the name of *prudence*, and where absolute covetousness wears the garb of a right consideration of what is due to the interest and claims of others—due to a man's own family—due to that provision which every man is supposed honourably to desire for them in their commencement of life ; for himself also, to sustain him in sickness, infirmity, imbecility, and old age. Under cover of the justice and merit of this plea, as expressing a prudent regard to the future, many, we fear, have indulged an extreme desire to possess and to hoard money; nay, under the guise of frugality, or a due regard to supplying the future, many have given themselves up to a grasping avarice, and have fostered in their hearts a love of money, which they persuade themselves is not hostile to the Christian life, but which too often becomes essentially a spirit of the world, and may do infinite damage to their Christian character.

We must not be misunderstood in what we are now saying. Beyond question it is a duty, and an impera-

tive, solemn duty, for every Christian to provide, according to his opportunities and abilities, for those who are dependent upon his assistance. St Paul, we know, wrote to Timothy on this very question,—"If any man provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he is worse than an infidel." But then he must take care that such providing shall not secularise his heart, and make him attach an undue value to the mere laying-up of money for his family, important as such provision may be. There are many things of far *more* importance; and sad and bitter will be the disappointment of that parent who is led to believe that in accumulating money, and in bequeathing that money to his family, he has done *all* that is expected from a Christian parent; and it will be a fatal result for the Christian's own peace of mind and hope in death, if his anxiety to leave wealth behind him for his family has stayed his hand in giving what he ought to the service of God. Would it not be a better, and a far nobler and more acceptable inheritance, to leave to a family the name of a parent honoured of all men with the name of a generous and large-hearted Christian believer, although with that he leave less of worldly wealth? To provide for those connected with them is, in the case of many persons, an imperative and Christian duty; but it is also a high duty to give liberally for the cause of charity and the promoting God's eternal truth at home and abroad. Having done all that reason and good feeling suggest for the benefit of wife and children, let this sacred and elevating promise, given from God

by Jeremiah, have some weight and influence upon every mind:—"Leave thy fatherless children, *I* will preserve them, and let thy widows trust in me."

The great lesson which we desire to enforce under this division of our subject is, that under no plea should we allow the love of money to make us forget what we owe to God, nor should its accumulation for any object, or on any pretence, induce us to relinquish our trust and confidence in the Divine promises of support and protection; that we do not push the practice of economy so as to injure the claims of Christian benevolence; and that we do not commit the fatal error of those who advance into old age, looking to their wealth as their great support, and at threescore and ten retain their *prudence* as their only virtue.

3. But, lastly, there is a love of money, and a covetousness for money, which seem to value it simply and solely for its *own* sake. We say this, because we so often find persons who are greedy to obtain money, and pertinacious in grasping it, who yet evidently have no idea whatever of spending it or giving it away. This is a melancholy phase of human imbecility; it is a humiliating and sorrowful spectacle to see the soul, and all its powers and faculties and affections, absorbed in such a passion. It is so degrading, that it is almost incredible that any rational and accountable and immortal being should be so enchained. But daily experience shows the fact, and life at every turn offers examples of the fatal weakness, even in persons by no means devoid of religious principle. Men have fallen into the

notion of an over-value of money for its own sake, because in holding it they hold in their grasp the power of procuring so many things—if they choose. It would be a good exercise, therefore, in correction of this feeling, if we would consider how many things money *cannot* procure. It cannot purchase peace of mind or an appeasing conscience—it cannot gain the friendship of the wise and good—it cannot give comfort in death—it cannot buy the approval of the Judge on the last day. But men do *not* consider all this. There are many in the world who hoard out of mere love of money. Nor for such characters can the plea be affirmed that they save for others, because often even to their own children they hardly can make up their minds to give at all. And in fact we may truly say of them, they give nothing, part with nothing, till they can keep it no longer, and often hate those who are to succeed them. No! it is the love of money for *itself* which enchains their souls. They will not give it to relieve the poverty and soothe the distress of fellow-creatures. They will not give it for pastoral or missionary Christian purposes at home or abroad; and if they do give, it is in the least possible proportion to their means, and is often really contemptible. And yet there are persons of this class who profess a zeal for God's truth. They make a profession of religion with it all, and contrive to satisfy their consciences either by evading the subject entirely, or by the deceitful sophistry and self-delusion which satisfies their minds, that in their hard refusals to give, or in their mere nominal contributions, they have fully

preserved their claim to the merit of a true and consistent Christian profession. We may rest assured that great love of money in any shape is a sore drawback in the onward path of a Christian's spiritual course. We cannot explain away or mitigate the strong terms in which the sacred writers express themselves on this subject. Our Lord's own words are, "Take heed and beware of covetousness." St Paul declares that "no covetous man" (who is an idolater) "hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Of covetousness he declares it to be "idolatry," and ranks it with the worst deeds and the most impure desires and feelings of human nature. This abhorrence of a covetous spirit, and this marked reprobation of avarice, must have reference to the inconsistency with the spirit of Christian piety which covetousness exhibits. The apostle reproves covetousness; our Lord warns us against covetousness, because it affects most injuriously the Christian character, and because it is opposed to all that is inculcated by the Gospel of Christ. To discern this, consider calmly what that Gospel demands. Remember the spirit which the Redeemer looks for in His followers and His servants, and what are the representations made to us in Holy Scripture of the present position and responsibilities of mankind, and what the Lord requires of every one as his bounden duty and service. Are we not all called STEWARDS, to whom are intrusted certain means and possessions, of which we are to make certain uses and applications, and for which we shall have an account to give hereafter? Does there not lie

upon us a responsibility to do good in proportion to our means, and to relieve such distress as lies fairly in our power? Did not our blessed Lord pronounce a special approval upon a poor widow, because she gave so much —*i. e.*, much for her, and being much in proportion to her all? Is not the great lesson of Gospel moral duty—giving up self and self-indulgence, practising self-denial for God in respect to what we most cherish, and more especially when He demands that self-denial as a sacrifice offered to Himself—forcibly inculcated? Take all representations of duty and of obligation before Almighty God, and then covetousness will really seem as if it were the very opposite and reverse of all that God requires of us—the antagonistic principle against the Holy Spirit of God—the dark spot that is to taint and corrode all that should have been good and generous in our nature. The Christian ought to be liberal and open-handed whenever a fitting occasion calls for his aid. Covetousness is ever making him close and hard, and ever seeking occasion to give as little as possible. The Christian should have no object of such supreme attachment in his heart as may in any way displace the allegiance due to Him who should be supreme, according to His own declaration: "My glory I will not give to another." But, alas! of how many may it be said—not in figure only, but, we fear, too much in the literal and true meaning of the words—that their money is to them an *idol*—an object entirely absorbing their affections and their care. The Christian ought to be willing to give. His language to his Saviour and Master at all times and under all circum-

stances should be,—"All I have, O Lord, is Thine. Oh, take all I can give—would that it were more!" But the covetous man ever seeks an excuse for not giving *at all*, or, when he must give, to give as little as it is possible in common decency and consideration of the opinion of the world. "Lay up treasure in *heaven*," is the precept of our blessed Lord to all His followers; but covetousness has a treasure *here*—and the covetous man's heart is not with God, nor is it set on things above. And why? Because "where the treasure is, there will the heart be also." But how often may we meet in life with Christian believers well esteemed in the world—respectable, moral, and even taking a conspicuous place in a religious circle —who yet show that *they* have a treasure here below, so important in their estimation, and so valued in their eyes, that their hearts can never fully and entirely centre elsewhere. There is always an eye fixed on that idol. We are unwilling to appear wanting in charity, or to give an unfair representation of any phase of defective Christian character, but experience bears out the conclusion to which we would point in these remarks. To many their covetousness is a stumbling-block, and it may be the last and only stumbling-block wanting to their full and devoted service of God. They can give much to Him in token of their grateful love. They can give time, and labour, and careful consideration, and sound advice. They can incur inconvenience, unpopularity, obloquy, and reproach, in doing God's service. But *they cannot give* their money. And yet, how men deceive themselves! There is a delusive sophistry which masters every con-

sideration, and throws all reasoning into the shade. Men could not, perhaps, well satisfy their consciences, under the circumstance we have spoken of, by giving absolutely *nothing;* but they compromise, by giving that which, whilst it saves appearances, creates no personal inconvenience—making a contribution so small that it shall not be felt. It is a wretched policy. It is forming the lowest and most degrading estimate of what is due to the claims of Christian benevolence. But this calculation, so unfavourable to the cause of almsgiving, is often the result of bad habit—of a traditionary low and inadequate standard for *religious* offerings; because we find that some men's covetousness visits them *only* when they have to give to God. For purposes of hospitality—for keeping up appearances in society—for providing means of education, of provision, or settlement of children—they are liberal, or even profuse; generous to assist a friend—munificent for some great political or social questions; but falling off and impoverished when the cause is connected with home charities—with church-extension or missionary labours.

This is, indeed, a dark picture of the results of the covetous spirit, and of the sad effects which it may exercise upon the Christian character. Let us judge the matter fairly. Let us look at human life, and see what covetousness has done. Covetousness makes the unnatural and hard parent—the cruel, unfeeling, persecuting creditor. Covetousness checks the hand, when, under a better impulse, it would reach forth assistance to the needy. Covetousness induces men to toil and labour for

wealth amidst weakness and imbecility, and makes them cling to thoughts of worldly wealth after all power of enjoying it is gone—when they have one foot in the grave, and when they should be setting their thoughts on the journey they must ere long take. Covetousness made Gehazi take by fraud what he was forbidden, and to lie to a prophet of the Lord, and draw upon himself and his posterity the foulest of diseases. Covetousness made Ananias and Sapphira draw back from their promised aid to the Church of God, and to lie to the Holy Ghost, and bring upon themselves a sudden and unprepared death. Covetousness made Judas commit the crime which stands recorded in the blackest characters of treachery and baseness the world ever saw—even the betrayal of the Lord of life to the malice and violence of His enemies.

If all this be true—and confirmed as true it is alike by Scripture and experience — what other motive is required for cherishing the liberal and generous spirit of the Gospel than the wish to *avoid* a condition of mind so painful and so revolting? How great is the contrast between the character and disposition of the man actuated by the spirit of avarice, and of him who feels the love of Christ constraining him to be bountiful and ready to give all he can for Christ's sake! Take the question in a mere worldly and temporal point of view, and ask whose is the most enviable condition? Surely the liberal man enjoys the greatest of all happiness—that which he has *caused*, and which comes back upon himself, reflected from the hearts of others. Yes!

He is the really happy man of whom it may be said, "When the ear heard him, then it blessed him, and when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him." Talk of the man being wise and prudent who saves for himself! *he* is the really wise man who spends for the good of others, and for promoting their spiritual and temporal welfare. Often have we wondered that, on mere selfish and worldly motives, men do not adopt the liberal policy, as that which is most productive of human happiness.

As we are desirous that these remarks upon diversities of faults in Christian believers should assume a form as practical and as applicable to the ordinary duties of common life as possible, we cannot, perhaps, better conclude this portion of our subject than by suggesting briefly a general rule or principle of action by which all may regulate their charitable contributions, and under which they may act, in assigning the portion due to the cause of Christian beneficence. The usual practice is for persons to look to what they *give*, and thus either to value themselves upon their liberality in making their offerings in the good cause, or as finding them just sufficient to answer the demand which is made by conscience upon their contributions. Having settled this matter by reference to what is *given*, the question is closed, and nothing further seems to be required. But what we would suggest in such a matter is, rather to look to what is *left*. In other words, let the Christian believer who desires to walk consistently and godly in the Christian path of life consider not so much what he has given as

what *remains* for him to give. In this way Christians would be more disposed to give according to their means, and we should avoid that bane of all our charitable contributions—viz., the settled idea that a certain fixed sum may be considered a sufficient contribution to do credit to a Christian profession, and in fact suffice for contributors of very different degrees of wealth and means. We would earnestly desire to set forth a method of viewing Christian charity, which might lead men more directly into the practice of the happiest of all its modifications—the DENYING SELF, THAT THEY MAY HAVE TO GIVE TO OTHERS. Those were words of grace and heavenly wisdom, left by Him who spake as never man spake on this point: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Memorable words indeed! Oh that all would receive and love them! that all would make them the rule and guidance of their own contributions to the good cause!

CHAPTER V.

FAULTS OF TEMPER MANIFESTED IN THE COURSE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE.

THE faults of professing Christian characters proposed for consideration in this chapter may be considered as a group involving many painful forms of irritation and violence of spirit, and the whole may be referred to one source, and described under one class — viz., that of *Faults of Temper*. We speak of these faults as constituting a class, because there is a variety of shape or form which they assume according to external circumstances, and according to men's natural dispositions, under which they are exhibited in Christian characters. The faults we speak of show themselves in many ways, but they are all ungraceful, and all inconsistent with those high and generous principles of action which ought to regulate the conduct of good men towards their fellow-creatures, which ought to rule the demeanour of the man of wisdom, the man of virtue, the man of good and kind emotions, but, above all, the man of Christian piety and Christian self-denial.

Men scarcely estimate the extent and the depth of evils which flow from irregular and uncontrolled temper. And yet it would be a very curious examination, and one productive of striking results, were we to trace back to this source all the numerous effects which would be found to proceed from it,—were we to show how many of the real evils of social life—how many of its acutest sorrows—how many mistakes of *public* life—nay, how many public evils and abuses, have proceeded simply from an ebullition of bad temper in some *one* or more individuals. Temper makes us lose sight of what is due to the calm remonstrances of prudence, the suggestions of wisdom, the lessons of virtue, and the holy precepts of religion. To gratify temper all else is forgotten, and therefore it often happens that what seems a most inefficient motive to conduct makes men act contrary to prudence, to wisdom, to virtue, and to religion.

Now, as it frequently happens that temper makes men form hasty resolutions and embrace rash conclusions, it is also the cause of their adopting, when under the effects of such irritation, the most dangerous course of *action*. The wrong step is taken under this influence; the error may be quickly seen and regretted; but it is too late to retrace—the evil is done, and sometimes irrevocably done. Temper makes men *seem* sometimes to differ more than in truth they do, but the breach is widened, and never entirely healed. Temper gives to the sarcasm or the reproach a sting which rankles in the wound, and which, in some temperaments, cannot be forgotten—it prevents reconciliation in the severe

and hard disposition, and hinders composure and comfort in the gentle and the sensitive. Temper often murders peace—it makes misery in families, and often with no want of kindly, liberal, or generous feelings, there is a wreck of domestic peace and joy.

With regard to its effects on others, we are convinced that persons have, by their temper, chilled many a warm disposition to a cold and torpid indifference—have exasperated to frenzy many a severe and stubborn disposition. Temper has broken many a trusting and gentle heart—most unintentionally, it has not unfrequently brought its victims to an untimely grave. Now we are anxious to observe that the faults of this class come directly and legitimately under the subject of these pages — viz., "The faults of professing Christian believers in their Christian course." In fact, such is the deceitfulness of the human heart, that even very grievous faults of temper do not come before the offender in their real colours; of course, in their rude and blasphemous and murderous outbreaks, there can hardly be a concealment of their true and *sinful* bearing. But there is a form and degree of temper which may be at the root of many of the evils which we have enumerated, and which may yet not appear so really inconsistent with a Christian profession as in truth it is; nor do men admit that indulgence in temper is so contrary to the spirit and precepts of the Gospel of Christ as an impartial, a careful, and conscientious examination of their own hearts would show them. What we mean is, that persons can, to a certain extent, indulge in ebullitions

of temper without remorse, and act upon the impulse of temper without seeing how sadly they are violating the great laws of Christian duty. Men, for example, may give way to temper, and yet pride themselves upon their zeal in the cause of God's truth and God's church —upon the liberality of their pecuniary contributions, their labour, and their time. Men may give way to temper, and yet boast of the uncompromising orthodoxy of their opinions—pride themselves upon their strict integrity, their rigid adherence to the Christian laws of temperance and purity. Men may give way to temper, and yet boast of their observance of the Sabbath, and reverence for the public worship of God's house.

From these and other causes of self-deception, it does happen somehow that indulgence of temper is a common failing in men of professing Christian character. It is perhaps the fault which we have most frequently to lament in good men, as an alloy or drawback of their goodness. We have known it, in our own experience and observation, as a very prominent cause for sorrow and humiliation. It seems often the last of human frailties overcome by grace; sometimes it is never eradicated —remains when all other evil propensities have in a degree been overcome.

We have already remarked that faults of temper are more naturally associated in our minds with the class of character which we have termed the *Impulsive*. Liable to quick feeling and keen emotion, temper shows itself in them under sudden ebullitions and hasty unconsidered actions and expressions. These may not be lasting—

may be reviewed with pain and sorrow—still there is a constant danger of serious injury being effected, and an injury sometimes not easily recovered. But, to pass from the evils and miseries occasioned in society by outbreaks of temper to what we may term the practical bearing of the question on men's position before God and their fellow-creatures, we shall now endeavour to show the injurious effects such indulgences must have upon their Christian character in a moral and religious point of view.

To put the question in a proper light, we shall first consider what are the *causes* of these outbreaks of temper, and what they indicate regarding the spiritual condition of the man, and the influence of Christian principle and Christian discipline within his breast. Now surely it must be allowed that such displays proceed from unregulated passions, and from feelings and emotions which ought to be under control. They are an index of the real state of the mind itself; they are the expressions of the *natural* impulses of men's feelings, and the manifestations of a triumph over the better judgment, over the whole man. So far, then, yielding to temper is unchristian, because the great duty of the Christian life is to *subdue* the inclinations of the natural heart; the object of Christian self-denial is to curb every passion which rebels against the teaching of Holy Scripture—to resist and to control the emotions which are opposed to the calm self-possession enjoined and promised to the Christian pilgrim by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. Whatever shows the victory of passion

over reason and decorum, of temper over the gentle words and meek example of Jesus, must be injurious to the Christian character — must show that a great deal has yet to be learned in the school of Christ. The man who is liable to violent outbreaks of temper plainly shows that he serves, or is unconsciously ready to serve, two masters, and two masters whose commands are incompatible, and who would often command the servant in two opposite directions. The result is obvious: the servant, placed in this position, has a miserable existence, obeying the master whom he knows he should *not* obey. Driven by hasty impulse from the path of duty, he passes his life in repenting at leisure of wrong he has done in haste, and he trembles lest some moment of irritation may cancel the happiness he has attained when he has been preserving a degree of self-denial, and been sitting patiently for a time at his Saviour's feet. In one word, the Christian believer who is under the dominion of temper, in so far as that he never knows how long he may continue free from its control, or how soon he may become subject to its caprice, cannot be said to have entered into that Christian liberty wherewith Christ constitutes the freedom of His true disciples and faithful followers. He is always in danger of deviating from the right Christian path, and to walk irregularly. However zealous he may be for Christ or for His truth, it is obvious he has not followed the example of his Lord, whom the language of prophecy has described as "oppressed and afflicted, yet opening not His mouth;" —brought "as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep

before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth;" and who had Himself called upon His disciples to "learn of Him, for He was meek and lowly in heart." He who gives way to temper has certainly shown no sympathy with the Saviour who called upon His hearers in such terms as these: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth"—"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." The man of hasty temper can hardly have weighed in his heart, and hardly read with prayer and deep meditation, apostolic teaching, such as Paul's, when he told Timothy to "be gentle unto all men, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;" or when he cautioned the Ephesians to "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from them, with all malice;"—or such as Peter's, when he called upon his disciples to whom he wrote, that they should follow the example left us by Christ, "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." That indulgence in temper must be oftentimes most injurious to the Christian, and often mar his usefulness as a man of Christian action, must be obvious on a moment's consideration. Whatever throws the mind off its balance, or impedes its free and unfettered action; whatever hinders the exercise of a sound discretion, or gives a wrong bias to the judgment; whatever gives an occasion for the predominance of passion, or of irritable feelings, over the voice of

reason, must be injurious to the right conduct of life, and endanger a failure in many plans and schemes of Christian beneficence. We know well how such plans generally require cautious deliberation—the greatest care and the most mature counsel. In many cases we find a slight deviation from the right mode of procedure will cause great mistakes, and often complete failure. There must be the greatest possible risk of a miscarriage in any scheme, when the outbreaks of angry passion are allowed to mingle with the deliberations necessary to its development. How much injury has been done to mankind—how many well-laid schemes and noble plans for doing good have utterly failed, because the play of men's angry passions has been brought to bear upon them! But we will go further, and we will say that the indulgence of temper not only injures the spiritual character of individual Christian men, and impedes the success of useful schemes of Christian benevolence, but that it often brings discredit upon the cause of religion itself. For it must be obvious that, whenever men who make a profession of religion, and seem zealous in upholding its great doctrines, come before the world under the excitement of bad temper—pouring forth rancorous and bitter abuse and sarcasm against those who differ from them—sacrificing what is plain duty, or abandoning the conclusions of a calm reason, in the heat of irritation and of anger,—a doubt must arise in men's minds as to the sincerity and truthfulness of their profession. No one can appear otherwise than lowered and morally deteriorated when

exhibited to others under the influence of violent passion. Those who look on, compare such exhibitions with the rules and precepts of that holy religion under which the men themselves profess to act, and by which they profess to be guided, and they cannot help noting the discrepancy and the inconsistency. The outrageous violence and bitter animosities of professed followers of the meek and gentle Saviour must tend to produce, in many minds, an unfavourable impression as to the sincerity of the belief of such persons, and may affect even their confidence in the reality of religious principle itself. It is this which makes the great evil of religious controversy. Parties engaged lose their temper; and it is a great evil in the Church, and no small source of scandal, when men of high station—men marked for piety and zeal—men venerable for age—are placed in such a position. The gentleness and forbearance of Christian godliness should be apparent under the keenest feelings of an excited religious controversy; and where this rule is violated, men will conclude that there is a defect either in the sincerity of the believer, or that there is something wanting in the power of the religion which he professes.

Now, after having so far enlarged upon the great evil, the unchristian demeanour, involved in the giving way to temper, and having endeavoured to point out the mischief and the danger to individuals and to the good cause itself, we must make the personal and practical application, and endeavour to impress upon all the importance of a study of their own character on

this most important question of Christian morals, that, by the grace of God, they may correct what they find wanting in themselves.

Faults of temper are not unfrequently found to cleave to characters of Christian profession—often of a high profession—and to characters in other respects zealous and devoted. But be assured, wherever temper is indulged, there is a defect in our practical Christianity, and a defect which may lead to consequences dangerous and distressing. It must affect the spiritual character of those who have allowed it to gain the victory. For only consider what is the great law or principle of a sincere Christian profession. Is it not the predominance of SELF-DENIAL—the practice of self-government—or what an apostle has termed bringing everything connected with the body "into *subjection?*" But how can a Christian be said to have established that self-control, that discipline of self-government in his own heart, who shows by his outward conduct that he is often the slave of his temper—the victim of passion—and who has not brought into subjection those angry feelings which are too ready, on every slight occasion, to rise up into rebellion? St James has borne testimony that "the tongue is a most unruly member." Let it then be the noble ambition of every Christian believer to gain a control over that unruly member; and let him take care that the good cause do not, in his person, incur the discredit of sanctioning the notion that an ungoverned temper can be, in any sense, consistent with a true Christian profession. Except we have gained

this conquest, we have not yet faithfully fought out the good fight, and not yet fairly won the immortal prize. We may have nobly sacrificed personal interests, and given up much that was dear to us for the good of others, or for the cause of divine truth; we may have forgiven great wrongs, and passed over injury and provocations which affected us deeply and painfully; we may have torn idols from our hearts, cherished for long time, and endeared by many favourite associations; and yet may not have gained the conquest over our daily temper. This is a work, therefore, which many may have yet to perform. It is with many a work of toil, and watchfulness, and labour. Many a one could accomplish more easily what at first sight may seem to be more difficult tasks, as we know where it is declared: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." We have said that every disciplined and consistent Christian believer should exercise control over his temper. But this, although truth, is not the whole truth —we ought to have said, he should exercise *habitual* control over that unstable element. The control is not confined to some great or trying occasions; it is not a forbearance exercised on some singular or remarkable occurrence, when the many looked on and applauded the act of self-discipline. But we speak of an habitual, a daily, constant exercise of the control of temper; the forbearance that belongs to home, to the family, to the private circle, to the times and places of which the world knows nothing, and of which the

world takes no account. We would earnestly call attention to this part of the question before us, because we fear that many persons deceive themselves regarding their true position and right feeling in this matter: they are not sufficiently on their guard; nor do they see the melancholy failure of duty and inconsistency of conduct in those who, although all forbearance, and smiles, and kindness in public, are fretful, impatient, and sometimes even violent, in the social and family circle. Such conduct is evidently most inconsistent with the whole tenor of Christian teaching—it is a sad failure in the discharge of that duty of self-denial and forbearance which every Christian ought to practise; because it is a failure in the *very place* appointed for its proper exercise, and towards the very persons to whom it is particularly due: for no doubt there is an especial call upon us to cherish the happiness of those who are nearest and dearest to us. Where should we be *most* careful to cultivate a gentle and conciliatory demeanour?—of whose feelings should we be *most* careful lest we wound or give offence, if not of those who are nearest and dearest to us? It is the real secret of promoting their enjoyment. The true happiness of life is not formed by great and stirring events, by unusual circumstances and extraordinary sacrifices, but rather by the constantly recurring incidents of the day—the numerous and almost nameless occasions where gentleness, forbearance, and tender consideration for each other, constitute the charm and peace of human existence. And it is this form of Christian kindness and benevolence to which every believer should direct his

attention and his prayers, for it may, after all, be the most difficult to maintain and perfect. Many who can perform an important duty, for which they have to make a great effort, may yet fail in sustaining their self-command amidst the daily trials of life. They can do well, but too soon become *weary* in well-doing; and the very spirit and essence of the duty we now speak of, consists of an unwearied and incessant repetition of acts of forbearance and of self-command. All these remarks regarding the government of temper in a Christian believer may fairly be urged upon every one, on the great and solemn principle of its being an essential element of that character and disposition which is most in accordance with the teaching of the blessed Jesus; and which is required of those who profess to have believed and received in their hearts the Gospel of Christ. But in regard to those who offend against the law of Christian forbearance in the domestic relations of life, we may add the additional motive and serious warning, that they may be laying up for themselves a load of remorse and self-reproach. We cannot better urge this consideration than by referring to the touching words of the American painter of English domestic life: "Go to the grave of buried love and meditate; there settle the account with thy conscience for every past benefit unrequited, every past endearment unregarded, of that departed being who can never, never return to be soothed by thy contrition. Then be sure that every unkind look, every ungracious word, every ungentle action, will come thronging back upon thy memory; then be sure that thou wilt lie down

sorrowing and repentant on the grave, and utter the unheard groan, and pour the unavailing tear, more deep, more bitter, because unheard and unavailing. There weave thy chaplet of flowers, and strew the beauties of nature about the grave; console thy broken spirit, if thou canst, with those tender yet futile tributes of regret. But take warning by the bitterness of this thy contrite affliction over the dead, and henceforth be more faithful and affectionate in the discharge of thy duties to the living." *

Here, however, we anticipate a common objection, which serves in some sort as an apology for that display of temper against which we have directed the present remarks. It is said that there exists a vast difference in the natural dispositions and natural temperament of different individuals; that some persons are by nature quick in feeling, and hasty of speech, and cannot be expected to have the same guarded and cautious self-control which is comparatively an easy task to others differently constituted, and by nature more composed as to the expression of their feelings. We are quite ready to admit that there is an essential difference amongst individuals in their constitutional bias and tendencies. Some men, gifted with high and generous dispositions, become at once keenly excited where their feelings are concerned; bitter retort and indignant invective come uncalled, and it is a great trial to seem calm and to prevent a violent and passionate outbreak of just and righteous indignation. With others it is no trial at all: by nature passion seems

* WASHINGTON IRVING'S *Sketch-Book.*

easily put down; the gentler emotions so prevail that anything like discord, and violence, and contention, seem distasteful to their nature, and they would rather escape from them than encounter them. Admitting all this as confirmed by experience and the natural constitution of men's minds, we can never admit the plea that any temptation to do wrong is irresistible or greater than man can bear, or that any difficulty which is insuperable occurs in the perfecting the Christian life. The power of grace, when aiding the strenuous and continued exertions of men themselves, is sufficient to overcome *any* natural predisposition to what is wrong: "My grace is sufficient for thee," is the declaration of Him who cannot deceive us. It would indeed be a most unworthy and ungenerous view of the divine dispensation in the Gospel of our Lord, to suppose that we are ever called to a duty which we could not perform—to a duty which He would not *enable* us to perform.

We may be assured that all may be done where the heart is right with God, and the energies of the Christian mind are supported by the power of grace. Those who offer this plea of a too powerful natural predisposition to be irritable and quick of temper, should remember that by indulgence they have themselves strengthened and confirmed the habit which would have been easy to check in early life, and which in more advanced years may be often difficult, but *never* can be impossible. This should furnish a warning to the young, whose minds are more easily impressed, when they see this effect of continual indulgence in temper. But we have an unanswer-

able argument against the assertion that natural temper may be so bad that it *cannot* be controlled. We know that it *can* be controlled, even on the lower motives of worldly prudence—by deference to a superior, for example, and for the purpose of carrying out the perfection of social refinement, or the politeness of the finished man of the world. The most violent temper we ever met with we have seen entirely subdued and kept under by such motives. In certain high presence, and under certain circumstances of worldly restraint, *any* violence of temper may be subdued. Do not, therefore, let it be said that, on the highest possible spiritual motives and inducements, Christians cannot do what men of the world accomplish on motives of worldly policy, and to preserve worldly appearances. Rather consider how blessed is the condition of the Christian believer, who, on the high principle of Gospel teaching, and in humble dependence on Jesus, has subdued all the angry passions of his nature, and can meet provocation, affronts, unkindness, and factious opposition, with calm composure and with a pitying forgiveness. See such a one—the centre of love and family agreement—at home, the peacemaker—abroad, pouring the oil of peace and harmony on the troubled waters of this world's strife; subduing the rude and violent spirits in their opposition, because in *meekness* he deals with all who oppose themselves; bearing with the ignorant and perverse; courteous unto all men, patient with all men; long-suffering with others, because he knows God, for Christ's sake, was long-suffering with him. If, under provoca-

tion of the unreasonable—if, under the pain and weariness of infirmity and disease, he feels inclined to be impatient, to be angry, to be violent, he then thinks of that God who is declared to be—*Love!* He thinks of that Saviour "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." He thinks of that heaven where neither violence nor discord, nor anything that is not peaceable and loving, can ever enter.

CHAPTER VI.

ON AIMING AT PERFECTION IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

IN the previous chapters perhaps as much has been said upon the details of "faults in Christian believers" as was requisite for explaining the object which we have in view. That object has been to point out the danger which accompanies inattention to faults lurking unseen, or at least unresisted, in the depths of the human heart, whilst men profess to be desirous of walking as Christians. We have not had in view, therefore, so much the question of those deliberate and wilful *sins* which entirely for the time separate men from God. Nor have we considered how it is that, in the indulgence of passion and of reckless rebellion, men become irreligious, profane, and unbelievers, scoffing at things sacred, and living without God in the world. But we have endeavoured to trace and to describe faults which are allowed and indulged by those who make a profession of religion, and oftentimes a marked profession. It is a very solemn and very important inquiry for us all. Evil lurks in the heart of all men—no solitude or seclusion from the world

is sufficient to separate us from its influence and its danger. This inquiry, therefore, must be always appropriate and always needed. Absolute perfection cannot, we are quite aware, ever be attained, because as men may at any time commit faults of words, of thoughts, of deeds, they may at any moment violate the rule by which alone perfection is attainable.

But the question now before us is not exactly the general prevalence of evil in mankind, but rather how it is that men, otherwise religious, and really sincere in their religious practice and belief, are led into a careless or a delusive permission of some *particular* fault of character. That fault may, by indulgence, become a matter of vital moment, so as even to compromise, and certainly to endanger, the religious character itself. We have a guide and special direction on this point from an inspired apostle, who has distinctly declared, that "whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend (*i. e.*, deliberately and wilfully offend) in one point, is guilty of all;" that is, in spirit and in principle is guilty of an offence against God's law taken as a great whole. And upon this declaration we have grounded our remonstrance and our caution against those evil tendencies, which the deceitfulness of the human heart, and the perversion of its sophistries, may permit a most dangerous ascendancy. Now, in recapitulation of what has been said in the preceding chapters upon these faults, as they are too often found to injure and alloy the Christian character, we have referred to four classes of faults, as embracing practical illustrations of the chief defects which men,

professing a religious observance, carry along with them through life, and often bear to the grave. This will, of course, lead to some repetition of what has been said, but it is desirable that we take such a general survey of the whole as shall bring the subject distinct before us.

1. The first group of faults we considered included the faults of an INDOLENT character—men who were good, but not sufficiently energetic in goodness — men with right desires and objects, but failing in stability and devotedness of purpose. Of this class, men really favourably impressed will put off amendment of faults. Of this class, men begin to do right, but cannot persevere, and fall away. Of this class, there are Christian men with much of what is good in their character, but it is too tame and cold. Everything is pitched too low. Like the Church of Laodicea, their fault is that they are neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm, in God's service. It is a great defect, but it may be a defect in a character where religion has not yet lost its hold—indeed, where there are good hopes for better days and higher aims.

2. The next class of faults is of a very different character. Here is an error not of too little, but of TOO MUCH ZEAL—too much, *i. e.*, in one direction—too much, because it leads to a neglect of other calls and other responsibilities equally important. Of this class are the Christian believers who adopt exaggerated and extreme opinions upon matters of doctrine, Church polity, and Church ritual. The character is sincere, earnest, devoted, but it wants balance. In the ardour of prosecuting one

object, some other object is overlooked. Among men of this class are found that type of the Christian character which is not wanting in religious profession, but wanting in the charity which the Gospel requires should be exercised towards all who differ. In this class are found those who dare to pass the condemnation and the judgment which belongs to God only. In short, they are so zealous for *their* own form of religious belief, that they will not exercise sufficient charity for others who differ from them, but who may, from *their* own principles, even though defective, bring forth much fruit of Christian godliness.

3. The third class of faults embraces those of AVARICE, or too great love of money. This, we fear, might often be pointed out as a fault in Christian believers. Such persons deceive themselves, because avarice may, by change of terms, insensibly take its place as economy or prudence, or as a due regard to the rights of others. It is not a bold and daring fault, or one palpably guilty of offence—nay, it may assume the garb and aspect of a *virtue*, as it may seem a duty to be prudent and saving for a family, and for the requirements of infirmity and age. Avarice under this garb especially is to be guarded against, as the common failing of advancing years. But a too great love of money—proceed from what cause it may—be it in the heart of a poor man or a rich man—is a snare and impediment in the way of spiritual attainment and moral advancement of character.

4. The fourth class of faults includes those that belong to TEMPER. It is a common failing, and often a fail-

ing of good men; therefore we endeavoured to show how it is that the indulgence of temper injures the Christian character in the person so offending—how it forms a drawback to the success and usefulness of Christian schemes of piety and benevolence—and how it may even cast a discredit upon the religion of a meek and gentle Saviour. This portion of our subject we concluded by attempting a representation of the peace and happiness and repose of spirit that Christian believers would attain who should in all things be guided and directed by the precepts of Him who called upon His disciples to take *His* yoke upon them, and to learn of Him, and to be like Him, meek, and gentle, and lowly in heart.

The great question now is, What do we deduce from this survey of the faults of Christian characters? Why do we so anxiously inquire into their origin, into the self-deceptions and fallacies under which they are concealed or polluted? Why do we so earnestly implore men to examine the state of their own hearts, and warn them of the danger they incur, even such danger as that of checking the onward progress to heaven—of obscuring the brightness of a Christian example—nay, of quenching the light of Gospel truth in the heart? What have we in view when pursuing those inquiries? There can be but one answer: all this is to enable men to *correct* their faults, to inquire strictly and practically, not only into the state of their hearts and conduct as they may appear upon that general and superficial examination which is sufficient to satisfy the ordinary observer, but to sift out those secret motives and concealed propensities from

which come so much of the evil which lingers in the Christian character, and thus to strike at the secret and hidden causes of ungodliness,—to search below the surface of what the world sees in men, and of what they often only see themselves, lest any *root* of bitterness springing up trouble and defile them, that as men go on in their Christian life, they shall be ever throwing off a particular fault, and thus at last subduing the influence of *every* fault. It is, we fear, but too plain that, occupied with doctrinal and controversial discussions, men do often overlook the practical importance of such details of self-discipline and self-content.

Our purpose, therefore, is that Christian inquirers should correct all their faults and never rest satisfied as if the work were done, so long as they can detect anything amiss. But it may be replied, You ask too much. It were hopeless to attempt the correction of all that is wrong in us. To err is human; and to suppose every fault eradicated would be to look to something visionary, and, in fact, to something without alloy or imperfection; and you can hardly say that we are to be *perfect*. Now, in answer to this, we reply at once: If you ask whether absolute perfection is attainable, we say it is not. There is no man living that sinneth not; and *one* sin of thought, word, or deed, however slight, must of course, of itself, destroy and neutralise the idea of an *absolute perfection*, because absolute perfection can admit of no degrees, and no being can be absolutely perfect who has ignorance, error, and infirmity. The doctrine, however, has been maintained both by Romanist divines and by the Wes-

leyan Methodists; but it is distinctly rejected by our Church in her 15th Article, thus entitled and thus worded: "XV. Of Christ alone without sin.—Christ in the truth of our nature was made like unto us in all things, sin only except, from which He was clearly void, both in His flesh and in His spirit. He came to be the Lamb without spot, who, by sacrifice of Himself once made, should take away the sins of the world; and sin, as Saint John saith, was not in Him. But all we the rest, although baptised and born again in Christ, yet offend in many things; and if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Now we fully admit, with this our 15th Article, that absolute perfection is *not* attainable by human nature in its present state of trial and probation; but what we urge—and what in this estimate of a true Christian life we endeavour to enforce—is, such an examination of men's faults and failings as may enable them to remove as many of the impediments to perfection as possible. We point out a pure and high standard of religious attainment, and inculcate a degree of religious excellence which, although no one has ever reached or can reach it, yet towards which all may and all ought to *approximate*. How far Christian disciples may advance in that approximation, or how far any *have* advanced, may be a question difficult of solution. But the clear duty, and the defined course, of every Christian believer on earth, is to despair of nothing—but, like St Paul, "forgetting those things which are behind, to reach forth unto those things that are before." This would give a defined and

distinctive character to his religious exertions. Such a one would strive to advance daily beyond the point he had previously attained. Thus, every day correcting some fault, every day strengthening some virtue, his Christian life would be a bright and glorious path stretching before him, and leading him onwards to the footstool of the Eternal Throne. Although he cannot perceive its termination, he yet perseveres, under God's grace and help, to advance further and further, and strives to keep secure every position which that grace and that help may have enabled him to attain.

Absolute perfection, or perfect freedom from sins of ignorance, of error, of judgment, we know is not granted to human nature. But we should inquire into the Scriptural sense of the expression, because Scripture does not hesitate to speak of those who, in some sense, *have* attained perfection, and also to exhort Christian believers that they are to be perfect. Our blessed Lord, in His Sermon on the Mount, thus exhorts the hearers and disciples who were about Him listening to His divine discourse: "Be *ye* therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" not, of course, absolutely that men can imitate or assume an attribute of the Deity, but relatively to human powers and capacities—*i. e.*, for men to be as near perfection *in the human nature* as that nature admits, just as God is perfect because it is His *nature* to be perfect. *Our* perfection, therefore, is in the putting forth all our power to *approach* the perfection of the Eternal, just as He says, in Genesis, to Abraham: "I am the Almighty

God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." And again: "I am the Lord your God, ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy, for I am holy;" and again, the apostle Peter: "As He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." All this shows that perfection, in these passages, must be interpreted to mean the *approaches* of the creature towards the perfections of the Creator. Then, in Eph. iv. 13, St Paul speaks of the attaining, not the point of divine perfection, but such *approach* to it as man is capable of, "till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect *man*" (such perfection as is human), "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

St Paul, in his writings to the Ephesian Church, plainly lays down the same doctrine, and employs the same terms in the same sense. Thus, in speaking of himself, he acknowledges: "Not as though I had already attained, or were already *perfect;* but I follow after, if that I may apprehend" (or *lay hold of*) "*that* for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." He found a law in his members that oftentimes when he would have done good, evil only was present with him; still he was never weary, was always pressing *toward* the mark — *i. e.*, the highest point to which human power, under grace, can attain. And to show further that he spoke of a perfection in this sense, he adds directly, "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect" (*i. e.*, are aiming at perfection), "be *thus* minded." The

perfection of the Christian believer, then, is not the absolute perfection of the *divine* nature, but it is the attaining that degree of advancement, or that approximation towards what is perfect, which belongs to the spiritualised *human* nature. In this sense we join with the Romanists in admitting a perfection of human nature as laid down in Holy Scripture; but then we differ from the Romanists in what they term the doctrine of "perfection of degrees," which means that a perfection is attainable which is incapable of improvement. *We* hold that no such state is attainable by man in a probationary condition. He may always improve till the last breath he draws; new heights of virtue, self-denial, and devotion, are always accessible. He may always forget what is behind, and always reach forth unto things that are before. The question, then, of the duty which lies upon us of maintaining the full doctrine of a constant aim and vigorous advance *towards* perfection, becomes a practical question of deep import, and involves very serious considerations connected with our personal religious character and our improvement therein. To feel that we must never rest satisfied with the religious position we have attained, but must always seek for a higher and a nobler one, would tend to correct the influence of two conclusions, both of which we conceive to be erroneous, and both opposed to what we are endeavouring now to establish. What we mean is this: Were men, in the first place, to believe in an absolute perfection to which they *had* attained, there

would be the danger of such over-confidence in themselves, and such presumption, as would render them careless and unguarded against temptation, as if to them there could be no more spiritual danger. But, secondly, where they fall short in their estimate of what may be done in advancing *towards* perfection, the natural consequence might be to form so low a standard of moral and religious attainment as would check exertion, and then the soul too easily and too readily falls back even from what it has once gained. In either way the question becomes a momentous one, and the real importance of it will be tested by that solemn and awful appeal made to every Christian believer by the apostle Paul, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Let him that thinketh he hath gained the *highest* point of mortal attainment take heed lest he fall, from the confidence and unguarded state of mind such a belief may too readily engender; and let him that thinketh he standeth, because he is careless about advancing further, take heed likewise lest he fall away from what good he hath already attained; for, beyond all doubt, every one who is withheld from pushing forward in the struggle to reach higher and higher points of improvement, allows his faith to languish, his spiritual ardour and energy to cool down, so that if he who thus thinketh he standeth does not fall into gross and unblushing sin, he may become indifferent, and soon unable to preserve the height of piety which he had once gained. Our true policy in pursuing the religious life

is to place the standard high—to make perfection itself the point towards which all our efforts shall tend, and, in short, to rest satisfied with nothing in the path of Christian godliness, so long as we see anything further is to be attained in piety and virtue. We are more and more persuaded of the fact, that much is lost by adopting too low and contracted a view of the Christian life. In every incident of our spiritual life, and in every emergency where we have to act as Christian believers, the first question should be, What is the line of conduct I *ought* to pursue?—wherein can I advance?—what is the point of excellence to which I ought to look? How often might men be saved from an unworthy line of thought and action by adopting the more elevated rule of duty! This is our deliberate conclusion, formed after long consideration, and by observing what is going on around us. When, on the one hand, we have seen how much of evil there is in the world—how much of cold selfishness is mingled with men's motives and conduct—how often the noblest principles of action have been sacrificed to some temporary policy of expediency—and when we have noticed how little hold the great and eternal laws of truth and holiness maintain upon men's ordinary trains of thought and judging,—we perhaps might be afraid to press too strongly the high doctrine of an energetic and untiring perseverance in reaching higher and higher towards the perfection of the Christian character, as being vain and hopeless. But when, on the other hand, we recall the glorious promises made in Scripture of assistance from on high—when we realise

the doctrine of the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts—when we remember the omnipotence of grace over the powers of evil—and when we farther mark what *has been* done, and what has been recorded in the annals of Christian piety—and what has been done in secret—and what is known only to God;—when we think of the magnificent examples of devotion to the cause of God and of His truth—of the noble offerings of an enlarged and enlightened Christian philanthropy—of that sinking of all selfish motives, and of that endurance of privation which human nature can bear for Christ, in patience, and in cheerful resignation, and in humble hope;—when, in short, we think of the glorious company of the apostles—the noble army of martyrs—of the devoted, holy, unwearied men of Christian piety of our own day,—we are then more fully encouraged to press forward in the upward path that leads to perfection's sacred heights—to pass unwearied from attainment to attainment, so long as life and spiritual powers remain. We urge upon all men to adopt the motto *Excelsior!*—higher; higher in the scale of virtue—higher in the steep and narrow path that leads to God—higher in the ascending scale of moral excellence which belongs to piety and perfection. Then we could urge, too, with more confidence, our warning to the Christian believer, no more to offer the commonplace excuse for feeble efforts in the Christian course—that perfection is unattainable, and why strive for an impossibility?—that so many temptations and impediments press upon the Christian pilgrim, that he may well be discouraged and

lose confidence in himself, and tarry behind in the race, beset with difficulties and trials both from within and from without. Such palliations and such excuses, we now tell him, may be offered by the children of this world, and by those who have no confidence in the assurance that God's grace is sufficient for them under *any* trials, and under any attacks of evil and the evil one. We remind them that God has promised to make them *more* than conquerors through Him who loved them and gave Himself for them. Let them grasp their high privileges and claim their birthright. Let every one put the question honestly to his own heart, Whether, in any case of spiritual emergency, he has done *all* that was in his power? Did he ever feel assured that he left nothing undone to retain the devotional heights he had gained, and to pass on to higher ground with a firmer step and a more undaunted courage? We cannot say exactly how far any child of humanity may have *actually* advanced towards absolute perfection. But we are quite sure that the far greater number, if not the whole, of those who have attained to a high spiritual position, must have felt on a deathbed self-examination and reflection, that more *might* have been attained had they been more devout, more diligent, more lowly and dependent, and more trusting in God's love and help.

In conclusion, then, let us bear in mind that the express object and purpose of all our reasoning and examination on these points is to bring home the great lesson of high advancement in Christian godliness, of spiritual improvement, and of correcting *every* fault and error by

which advancement is checked and improvement retarded. For this purpose we must all study to have self-knowledge. The Christian character can only be formed, strengthened, and advanced by cherishing all the *particular* acts of godliness by which it is to be made acceptable to God, and by subduing all those faults and offences by which it is gradually deteriorated and at last destroyed. It was needful to enter upon particulars. We must examine the questions in detail. We do not pretend to have done more than give hints and suggestions for prosecuting the inquiry. At all times it is a fit subject for serious reflection; but at those times especially, when the noise and hurry of the world are hushed and calmed, and when in retirement we commune with our own hearts, then it is most suitable that we may examine our ways and search into our past conduct. We are quite aware that we may have often very inadequately expressed our own meaning, and often very imperfectly developed the great questions at issue. But may God by His grace, and by the light of His Holy Spirit, supply all such defects to those who may perhaps be led to examine for themselves the questions here pointed out. Men's faults frequently go uncorrected because they are unknown, and they are unknown because they have not offered up with sufficient earnestness and sincerity the devout prayer of the Psalmist: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" —Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24.

PART IV.

PART FOURTH.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN ITS PERFECT CONDITION IN HEAVEN.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN TRIAL THE GERM OR COMMENCEMENT OF THE SAINT'S HAPPINESS IN GLORY.

WE enter now upon the fourth and last division of our subject, which is the *ultimate* development of the believer's religious condition. This portion of our work deals only with what is encouraging and elevating. It is intended to stimulate the Christian in his *present* course of religious duties, by directing his affections and his hopes to all that is to come as the result and the reward of previous toil and self-denial. But in order to put this part of our subject on its proper footing, we must ever look beyond the confined limits and the littleness of time.

When treating of the Christian life and character—its difficulties, its trials and discouragements,—the diversities of disposition by which it is affected, and the diversi-

ties of faults by which it is obscured,—we are not to limit our inquiries and our descriptions to the merely earthly course which that life has to pass through during the time of its mortal sojourn. We must always have reference to the elements which belong to it in Eternity. It is a great mistake in our consideration of practical religious questions to estimate only their peculiarities as belonging to the present: we should in all our inquiries blend together what belongs to this world and the next.

The "life of God in the soul of man," must be considered as belonging to a mortal state, and at the same time as destined for eternity. Man is an immortal being, and *cannot* die. His existence stretches into the illimitable and the boundless. It is false in doctrine and error in sound policy to allow the mind, even for a moment, to admit of a separation. Man's spiritual being is of two *portions*—that which exists now in time, that which exists for ever hereafter. The representations of Holy Scripture lead us to believe that there will be stronger points of resemblance between the two than we are perhaps aware. And certain it is, that one is the *continuation* of the other, one the preparation *for* the other, and that the result of one must decide and fix the eternal destinies, the happiness or misery, of the other. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, we have perhaps more direct reference than in any other portion of Holy Scripture to the condition that in another world immediately follows the condition of the present. We must not too rigidly, or too literally, apply the accessories or mere machinery of a parable, as

matters of distinct revelation. Nor would we press particular expressions beyond what was intended for constituting its narrative. But surely from that narrative we gain the general and important fact, that the life beyond the grave is to be considered only as a continuation of the life here on earth. The one took its tone and character from the other—death in a moment made the change; and of the poor man it is said that he died, and, immediately on dying, was "carried by angels into Abraham's bosom;" that the rich man also died, and had no sooner died than "in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment." This present life, therefore, which is in man, must go on; he cannot escape from this law of existence. He may himself end *this* life,—he has a power over it; he may, with rash or frantic hand, put a period to his earthly course, and overstep the bounds of humanity otherwise than God provides for His creatures, but once in the other world he dies no more. He may call upon the rocks to cover him and annihilate his being, but he must call in vain. He is now immortal, and his lot must be assigned for ever. When we treat, therefore, of the inner or spiritual life of the Christian believer, we treat of what belongs to a great and all-important question as affecting the undying future. It is this which gives such a deep and abiding interest to all inquiries regarding the cultivating, training, strengthening, and perfecting the Christian character on earth, because it is to cultivate here a life which we carry beyond the boundaries of the visible and the temporal; and the connection of this portion of our work with the preceding

portions is exactly this—we take up a *continuation* of our subject—THE CHRISTIAN OR INNER LIFE. We address every one as carrying within his own breast an undying principle. We do not now speak merely of the policy of providing for the happiness, the wellbeing, of a period here composed of its forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years. No! the question is, What will be men's state for unnumbered ages? The inquiry relates to a condition of which time and change are no elements. No doubt, ordinarily speaking, men *believe* in a state after the present existence is past, and when its cares and joys and sorrows shall have ceased for ever. They do not hold any theory of this life terminating man's being; but the land on this side death, and the land beyond death, seem to them something quite distinct and separated in their minds. The future seems generally something so vague, dark, and mysterious, that they do not join its interests with the present, or seem to keep up the idea of one being a continuation or *preparation* for the other. All that is connected with life here, men believe will have to undergo an entire change; of that other life, they know not what it is to be. The veil is too close for mortal vision—the cloud too dark for the eye of flesh to penetrate. But in all discussions and inquiries regarding the cultivation and advancement of the Christian or spiritual life, we would inculcate feelings and draw conclusions the opposite of all these. We would seek to *identify* the Christian life of the redeemed on earth with the future existence of the redeemed in heaven. We would endeavour to establish

not only the resemblance which holds in so many points between them, but we would seek to impress the great truth of the dependence of one upon another; we mean, the dependence of what *shall* be there, upon what *has* been here. We are now in a state of preparation. It is the early dawn of a bright and endless day; and not more surely is the child the father of the man, than is the earthly and mortal life the germ and early stage of a heavenly and an immortal existence. This is the real and correct analogy between the two conditions of mankind—the condition here and the condition hereafter. Infancy and childhood and youth bear the same relation to the manhood and old age of human beings that the present life bears to the future life and fixed condition of the redeemed. It is curious and instructive to follow out the details of that analogy, and to observe how clearly it teaches us that man is now in a course of fitness and preparation for what is to come—that the events of this life assume a tremendous importance when viewed in connection with their results hereafter—that the world is a field where a crown of immortal glory is to be won not without toil and self-denial. Man's present life, with its hopes and fears, its motives and excitements, its opportunities, talents, and faculties, its joys and sorrows, its light and darkness, its ignorance and knowledge, all tend to form an arena on which men are to contend for a great and priceless reward—to constitute a discipline under which they are to be fitted for more glorious enjoyments, and to be capable of filling a far higher condition, and occupying a far higher position,

both for happiness and virtue, amongst the beings of superior orders in the scale of intelligence and bliss—those beings themselves marking the present contest and the struggle with a benevolent solicitude. This is the true comparison or analogy between our present life and the life which is to come. It is well known with what matchless sagacity and skill it has been developed by Bishop Butler, in his immortal work, *The Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion.* An examination of a few particulars will show us the practical conclusions to which it would lead. In the first place, then, it is evident that, in the early stages of man's mortal being, there are the germs of the faculties and the affections which are to be developed and more fully exhibited in after life. All are there, but all are in that incipient and imperfect state which requires a careful process for giving strength and direction to fit them for the future ; hence the necessity of all that we call education or training of the child—its intellectual culture. Without this training the child grows up unformed, and unfit for the positions he has to occupy in after life. But it is not only the intellect and the talents which require this preparation and fitting for what is to come ; but a *moral* discipline is to be exercised upon the habits and dispositions, the tempers and affections. All this teaches us, by a powerful lesson drawn from the analogy of our *present* being, that a Christian life of piety and virtue on earth must precede and prepare for a glorified and blissful life in God's presence hereafter. Not more surely does youth and childhood lead to manhood, than does a probationary and

temporary existence lead to a permanent and a heavenly one.

II. Take another case in which the resemblance will be found to hold. Consider how the neglects, the mistakes, the over-indulgence, the influence of bad instruction and bad example, act unfavourably on the future condition of the person so misconducted in early life; nay, consider what misery and ruin we often thereby caused to the individual, and how unfitted he is made for the place for which he was destined, how unable to enjoy the privileges which had been assigned and secured to him. In all our reasonings, then, upon the wisdom and duty of diligently cultivating the Christian life on earth, we should never for a moment lose sight of the great and leading idea, that it is preparing and fitting us for the kingdom of heaven. We are not now so much engaged with those great principles and doctrines by which the heavenly inheritance is to be *secured*, as with those details of virtuous and religious training under which we are to be fitted for its *possession*. Here, we would remark, is an especial office of the Holy Spirit to be recognised and to be earnestly sought for. In the words of our Church Catechism, each catechumen is instructed to say, "I believe in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God." In other words, as Christ has purchased salvation for us by His precious blood, the Holy Spirit joins in the blessed Redeemer's glorious and gracious work. He aids the redeemed to be "*meet*" for—*i.e.*, by His sanctifying influences—to be *fitted* for the inheritance of the saints in

light. On this point the analogy from human life is most instructive. Suppose the individual case of a person entered upon the business and duties of any particular profession or occupation; suppose his instruction in its principles has been utterly defective—his habits so formed as to unfit him for a due and efficient discharge of the business to which he is called;—how miserable, how discreditable, is the failure of such a person, and how manifestly is that failure in his present position owing to his want of proper training and teaching in the previous position, where such training and such instruction ought to have been acquired, and which it was intended *should* then have been acquired! We see this exemplified in life's experience every day. But take a more general case, and one which may perhaps better illustrate the question with which we are now occupied. Take the instance of a child destined to hold a high position in society. By birth he has become an inheritor of such a high place. The circle which awaits his arriving to manhood is distinguished by refinement and lofty moral principle, by high intellectual culture, and by delicacy of tastes and feelings. The child is to be educated, trained, and fitted for this position. His instruction and discipline, if rightly conducted, it is obvious must have a reference to his future place in the world. Those who are his instructors and guardians will naturally feel that their task is to inculcate such principles, supply such knowledge, and form such habits, as will fit the child for the duties and occupations of the man—so to cultivate and prepare his

intellect and affections as shall make him adorn his position, shall make him capable not only of fulfilling his obligations, but of appreciating and enjoying the high privileges and advantages to which, by the circumstances of his birth, he has been destined. Now, it is quite obvious that, according to that previous training, this child will be fit or unfit, will be an honour or discredit, to the place in which, by the course of Providence, he has been called. If his education be mismanaged or perverted—if he be allowed to fall under the influence, persuasion, and example of dangerous and unprincipled companions—if the worst tendencies of human nature and the most defective parts of *his own* nature be allowed to gain strength, and to have free and uncontrolled indulgence—if the better feelings of his character be checked and turned to ridicule instead of being fostered and improved—if no pains are taken to instil sound knowledge and useful information—if indolence, selfishness, and indulgence are allowed to gain their hold upon his character,—then it is obvious that the child so brought up will be quite unfit for the position to which he is by his birth and circumstances entitled. His place in society becomes entirely a false position, and the man's training is obviously to all beholders a miserable failure. But supposing that the whole case is less notoriously a bad one, the question may become a question of *degrees;* there may be points in which the educational training has been partially a failure. Without a total unfitness, there may have been mistakes and omissions which have rendered him unfit in some parti-

cular points; and partial failure in such points might go far to render him unfit for the whole. These partial defects in previous training and preparation show themselves at every turn, and run through his whole career. They produce an obvious incongruity of character for the duties, the society, and the high privileges to which the individual has been called. It will at once be seen how we mean this comparison or analogy to bear upon the question of the inner or spiritual life as a preparation for another and a higher state of existence *beyond* the grave, and in the immediate presence of God and of the Lamb and of the seven spirits of God. Can we for a moment question that, if bad use of early days in this world shall unfit a man for the later years of his mortal life, bad use of the time allowed us on earth may unfit us for the possession of an inheritance which is ours by our Christian birthright? It is evidently the purport and intention of the divine economy, that the present life shall constitute a training and secure a fitness for a state which is to succeed. There is a certain condition of the moral feelings, desires, hopes, and inclinations, which must be previously formed and cultivated before the mortal life which has been appointed here can pass into an immortal life beyond death, where those feelings, desires, and tastes form the very elements and essential character of its existence. Of course no one reaches *perfection* in the present state of being. After all, there will be many shortcomings and many errors, which mark the difference between the probationary and the perfected condition, the state of trial

and the state of glory. But a foundation must be laid for eternity; principles must be settled and established in the heart, *habits* of serious thought and of devotion must be formed, which will be strengthened, expanded, and purified hereafter. The seeds of piety and virtue must be sown and must germinate in the earthly soil, under the clouded suns of earthly seasons; but the fruit of them will be gathered in the golden harvests of heaven's blissful fields, and under the bright effulgence of eternal day. It seems as if a common notion of heaven were that of a locality and a life with feelings and occupations altogether and entirely different from what God has appointed for the present temporary and probationary condition; that it is comparatively of small moment what men are here, because that, when the soul is admitted into the precincts of heaven's sanctuary, an entire and miraculous change will pass over the human spirit—new ideas will be imparted, new knowledge conveyed, new feelings and desires implanted in the breast,—and, as it were, the substitution of a new set of emotions, tastes, and perceptions. It is a great mistake! That a great and wonderful change will take place upon the happiness and the feelings of those who shall after this life be admitted into the joy of their Lord, there can be no doubt whatever. Who can say how great will be the change in our bodies, our occupations, our enjoyments, our perceptions, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, when this mortal shall have put on immortality, and when the saying shall be brought to pass that "death is swallowed up in victory!" But these relate

more to change in *extent* than in nature. As to the great principles of piety and virtue within the heart, there are many respects and many points that are essential and important in which we do not believe that such differences will be found, or that such organic changes will take place. It is not, of course, for us to venture on making limitations to the power of God in changing the heart and feelings of His creatures, but we feel convinced that no one will be admitted to the happiness and the glories of heaven without a previous training and preparation for that happiness and that glory. It may be doubted whether God *would ever* admit a creature to bliss except so prepared. Angels even appear to have been trained and tried by passing through a probationary course.

Love to God, adoring and grateful feelings towards the divine Redeemer and the ever-blessed Holy Spirit of God—the happiness of God's presence, of the communion of saints and angels, and of just men made perfect,—these are elements of enjoyment for *both* conditions, because they form the happiness and the glory of both. It would therefore be of all errors the most fatal and the most dangerous, to indulge the hope that we might continue here indifferent or impenitent, careless about holy things, worldly-minded and indevout, and yet hope for admission to the seats of bliss hereafter, *because* God can make the needful change, and under the expectation that the mere power of God will at once and without training fit us for the heavenly mansions and occupations. We are not to speculate,

as we have said, upon what the omnipotence of God may or *can* accomplish, so much as we are to examine through what means and instruments God actually *does* bring His own purposes and objects to pass. And if any truth be plainly and clearly revealed in the Word of God, it is this—viz., that the change which fits men for the kingdom of heaven must begin on earth; that certain dispositions, desires, and feelings must be formed in us, and cherished and cultivated in time, which will, through eternity, expand and increase in bliss and glory. Take the plain and common-sense view of the matter, and let us ask ourselves how it could be otherwise. How could any one be supposed to enter the golden gates of heaven who had no fitness either for its occupations or taste for its enjoyments? Heaven would be no heaven to many in their present state and condition of feelings and affections. How can those who have had no delight in attending upon the services of the sanctuary on earth, be supposed fitted to enjoy the praises and adoration of the Church triumphant in the presence of God? Shall the hands that have been here stained with avarice, oppression, dishonesty, or fraud—employed too often in doing the works of the devil—ever hold the palm of victory over sin and Satan? Shall the head which here was always contriving for selfish gratification, or plotting mean and selfish ends, ever wear the diadem of immortality? Shall the heart stained with impure desires, bitter animosities, and cruel hatreds, ever expand to the anthem of eternal holiness and love? It cannot be: the whole

tenor and analogy of what we know of God's dealings forbid it.

In conclusion, then, we would say, it is a great and glorious course which is set before us. How encouraging it is to think that we are now in a trial and probationary condition, in which we are to foster and advance an inner and spiritual life—a life of God in the heart of man —a life destined for immortality—a life which, under God's grace, may be prepared and fitted for the divine presence and the society of angels, and of spirits freed from the infirmities and impurities of this mortal life! But, at the same time, how terrible the thought that we may actually UNFIT ourselves for the future and the heavenly condition! Oh how deep and solemn the responsibility which is incurred, during the fleeting moments of the present time, for the eternal duration of the life to come! How tremendous the issue of our present choice! how immeasurably important the result of our present determinations!

CHAPTER II.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE TO BE VIEWED IN ITS PERFECTION IN HEAVEN—ITS FUTURE HOW DESCRIBED IN SCRIPTURE.

WE have now fairly opened the question of the connection which should ever exist in the mind of the believer between the spiritual or Christian life, begun on earth, and that same life consummated in heaven. We have shown how vain—how utterly hopeless—it must be to expect that we can be fitted for taking part in the occupations of the Church above without a previous training and preparation in the Church below. We have noticed that, great as will be the change wrought on those who are admitted to a glorified existence in the upper sanctuary of God's praise, there must have been that previous conversion of heart and conduct which God requires shall be wrought out amidst the difficulties and the trials of a probationary condition in this lower region of God's moral government. This being so far established in our minds as the TRUTH, we now proceed, with cautious steps, to pursue the inquiry into the nature and character of that future to which we

all hope to come, and towards which all our thoughts and efforts now should be directed. It seems essential to the completion of our subject that we should have entered upon this inquiry. Our professed object is to mark the origin, progress, and *perfection* of the Christian life; and to mark that perfection we point out what are the *future* destinies of the spiritual or inner life which is now to be pursued. We have endeavoured to show the nature, the difficulties, and the struggles of that life, and have pointed to the circumspection required under varying circumstances in bringing it to maturity. But in all this it has been understood that the Christian life which is proclaimed to the understanding, and of which the acceptance is urged upon mankind, has of course a reference to a still greater, because an *ultimate*, object — the completion and perfection of the Christian life after death. The Christian life on earth will but place us on the threshold of a great and eternal future — it is to place us in the vestibule of a glorious temple, which erelong we hope to be fitted to enter. That greater future, and that more sacred than any earthly temple, must never be forgotten or lost sight of. We are quite familiar with the idea of one portion of *human* existence preparing us or fitting us for another. We enlarge upon the blessing and the beauty of early piety; we urge a timely use of all the means of grace and the discipline of self-denial, on the grounds of the advantages of piety in the day of sickness, sorrow, infirmity, old age, and death. We call to mind that health, youth,

strength, and spirits will pass away; that nothing can sustain the spirits of a man under their loss but to have made his peace with God, and remembered his Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, in the day when he had the time and opportunity; that nothing is so deplorable, so miserable, as a godless old age—an unchastened unsanctified close of human life. But we must push the argument from future scenes and future prospects beyond the interests and concerns of this life. We must never forget that here is neither our rest nor our reward; that all is bearing upon an awful, a tremendous FUTURE; that it is for it we are now preparing; that if a godless old age be terrible, how much more terrible must be a godless eternity; that the inner holy and struggling life is only a preparatory step to a glorified and a blissful life which is to come. Surely, then, we should have some notion of that life for which we are in training here, just as pilgrims pass through a wilderness and make a weary difficult journey to a home of happiness and peace. It is essential that we should know something of the far country to which we are bound—that we should be cheered by the prospect of happiness which lies before us, and thus more readily and more earnestly contend for a fitness and preparation to possess and to enjoy it. Here, of course, we are met with the obvious and acknowledged impediment to the pursuit of such inquiries, and the efforts to obtain such knowledge of the future state which is to reward all our toils and consummate all our hopes. It is said, such knowledge is far above our present capacities, and

its details are far removed from our present sphere. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for us, we cannot attain unto it; a veil of thick cloud interposes between our present vision and the scenes which lie beyond the grave; no traveller has ever returned from the mysterious and divine country to tell us the particulars of the nature, the existence, occupation, and joys of its inhabitants; nay, Scripture expressly tells us, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive" its future glories. We must guard, therefore, it is said, against yielding to the dictates of fancy and following the uncertain guidance of imagination: in one word, we must not attempt to be wise above what is written. There can be no question of the difficulty of the subject, and the need of a caution which must be observed in all our reasonings and conjectures when we engage in its consideration. Much will be ever shrouded in obscurity and darkness. What is revealed regarding the other world is necessarily limited by our present imperfect and trial condition. Many questions we cannot answer; many points must remain obscure and uncertain, so long as we are encompassed with a mortal body and subject to the infirmities of a mortal condition. We must be cautious in our speculations and diffident as to conclusions; still, these cautions and this reserve (right and fitting as unquestionably they are) ought not to be pushed beyond their due and proper limits. We must *inquire* into the nature of the things which are to come. If we are really interested in the future lot

of the righteous, we cannot *avoid* making inquiries and falling into reflections on the actual condition of a lot to which we are approaching. If it be an error to attempt being wise *above* what is written, it is surely no less a duty that we should be wise *up to* what is written; in fact, much may depend upon such knowledge and such impressions of what is to come. For if we are to explain the nature and character of the Christian or spiritual life on earth, which is to result in the bliss and glories of heaven itself—if we urge our hearers to diligence, self-denial, and perseverance in the course they pursue *here*, because they are in preparation for another and a nobler course which they will pursue through the ages of eternity,—then surely we must endeavour to enforce these injunctions by telling the Christian believer *what* he is to gain. Holy Scripture tells of good men running with patience the race set before them—overcoming difficulties in their way, and persevering unto the end, because they had in view the recompense of reward. Persuade a man of the greatness of the recompense, assure him of the brightness of the reward, and you then let him know what God has done for him, what He is ready to do for him, and what a great and glorious destiny is reserved for those who shall pass through life determined to love and fear God and keep His commandments. And when we come to inquire more particularly into the nature of that life which lies beyond the grave, and when we desire to hold forth the high and stirring motive for being faithful to God on earth, that we shall

inherit a home of repose and peace—a state of ever-during and entire happiness such as no human language can describe, no human intellect conceive—we are fully authorised in saying that we shall find quite as much as ought to convince us how glorious is the prospect that lies before us — how great the reward, how transcendent the recompense. Quite enough is told in Holy Scripture to furnish such motives to perseverance as would make men steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing well that their labour will not be in vain in the Lord. Of this also they would be well assured, that no imagination or conjectures which we formed now of the future glories of heaven can ever equal or come near to the reality. The admirers of the wisdom and riches of Solomon found, upon closer acquaintance, that the *half* had not been told them. Here, however, in regard to the revelations of the Word of God on a future condition, we would remind you of an obvious distinction in the character of all such communications. They may be of a positive or of a negative character—they may tell us what the future condition of the blessed shall be, or they may tell us much of which it shall *not* be. Where an unseen and future condition differs from a present one, and which is to be described to those who know *only* the present one, the historian may enlarge upon its glorious qualities, and describe in glowing colours what is there, or, without any special description at all of what it is, he may enumerate points wherein it is *not* the same as the condition with which men are acquainted. Now if,

as in the case before us, the unknown condition is so far different from the known that it would be difficult and often impossible to make the occupants of the earthly condition understand what is in heaven, there could be little difficulty in the way of telling them what is *not* in heaven—to tell them that on such and such points heaven *differs* from earth, and heavenly things from earthly ones. Let it be observed, too, how often the negative description is the best for the purpose—more precise, more convincing, and more practical. The angel of mercy sent to persuade men to take up their cross and follow Christ to mansions of eternal blessedness, might well be supposed saying to those whom he sought to influence for good, "In your present condition of infirmity and imperfection, with your defective knowledge of divine things, your earth-born notions, and limited power of apprehending what is beyond the present sphere of knowledge and of action, I might tell of many heavenly things, and you comprehend them not. I might descant upon a state of feelings and occupations to which you might attach very vague or very imperfect notions; but, knowing as you do the nature and character of the present condition of being—knowing the sorrows, the sufferings, the imperfections, and sins by which your path is at present encompassed—it must come home to your feelings and understanding to learn what will *not* be found in the new untried condition—to have the assurance that many of those peculiarities which give a colour to your present life, which make this world so truly a world of misery and imperfection,

will hereafter cease; whatever may come in their place, *they* will exist no more."

With these preliminary remarks, therefore, we now proceed to detail the examples of this negative description of the state of the blessed hereafter, and of these instances we find in Holy Scripture no less than nine cases enumerated—*i. e.*, descriptions of what are *not* in heaven.

1. St John, amongst the wonderful things which he heard and saw when in the Spirit on the Lord's day, was distinctly assured there shall be no more *curse*—*i. e.*, the primeval malediction of "Cursed is the ground for thy sake," is removed. The sentence passed in paradise upon the son of man is for ever remitted, and the work of Jesus Christ in redeeming us from the curse of the law is completed—"There shall be no more curse."

2. "There shall be no more *death:*" this was distinctly revealed to St John, Rev. xxi. 4, "And there shall be no more death." But our Lord had Himself previously, in speaking of those who should hereafter in heaven be like the angels, so described their condition, "Neither can they *die* any more." St Paul had also, speaking of the work of Christ, declared that He *abolished* death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. In the same spirit, Isaiah, xxv. 8, "He will swallow up death in victory;" and again, Hosea, xiii. 14, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

3. "There will be no more *sin*." In the heavenly city nothing exists that is impure or morally wrong.

Such was the solemn assurance revealed to St John in the Apocalypse, "And there shall in *no wise* enter into the heavenly city and kingdom anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." The inhabitants there have "washed their robes and made them pure and spotless in the blood of the Lamb."

4. "There shall be no *sorrow*." When John was assured that death would be no more, he was also inspired to write, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be neither sorrow nor crying, for the former things are passed away." Indeed, the evangelical prophet Isaiah had long before predicted (xxv. 8) the same happy time, when the Lord God will wipe away tears from off *all* faces.

5. There will, in fact, be no bodily ailment. St John was assured, "Neither shall there be any more *pain*." In describing the future privileges of the heavenly Zion, Isaiah too had predicted, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick."

6. In heaven the prophet and the evangelist, both of them, and in the same terms, announce distinctly of the inhabitants, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more."

7. There will be no *darkness*. The evangelist describes the gates of the new Jerusalem as never shut, "for there shall be no *night* there." Night, indeed, could not be looked for in that city of which the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the ever-living, ever-present temple, where the glory of God doth lighten it, and

of which the Lamb is the light thereof; and Zechariah the prophet (xiv. 6) had so described the coming of Christ's kingdom and glory, that the light should not be "*clear nor dark*"—not marked with earthly alternations of day and night—but all shall be "one day"—one cloudless, happy, glorious day.

8. There will be no change, or partings; for, as St Paul assures the Thessalonians, the righteous, when brought to the presence of God, will be "*ever* with the Lord;" and Daniel also had said of the saints of the Most High who should take the kingdom, that "they should possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."

9. So likewise to those who shall attain the bliss and glories of the heavenly mansions, the ordinary measures of a mortal and temporary duration shall cease, for the angel whom St John in the Revelation saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever that "there shall be *time* no longer." Time shall be absorbed in eternity—time, with all its uncertainties and delays—time, with its cruel separations and abrupt interferences with human happiness—will be no more.

Here, then, are the particulars through which the Holy Scripture has by negatives described the future and eternal condition of the redeemed in glory. Think on all that is implied in these descriptions, and let it be said no longer that we have lights so very imperfect upon this great question—that we have too little or too vague information for our guidance, or for making us *seek* those things which are above. How much is told

us of the issue of that inner spiritual life, the consideration of which we are now enforcing, when we find that in heaven there is no curse, no death, no sin, no sorrow, no pain, no hungering or thirsting, no parting, no night, no time. But — oh, dreadful thought! — we fear — we greatly fear—it is equally plain that the precise *reverse* of all that is here negatively said of the blessed may be affirmed positively of the lost. What must be *their* condition in regard to those things? In the abodes of those who shall not enter the kingdom of heaven, the curse of the primeval sentence must still hang over the impenitent and the guilty: death is only not there because they cannot in death close their sorrows; sin unrepented, unredeemed, is there; sorrow of unavailing regret is there; hungering and thirsting are there, perpetual as the hope which comes to all beside, but which never comes to them; pain is there, if any meaning is to be attached to descriptions of the Word of God; night is there, for Scripture speaks of the wicked being consigned to outer *darkness*—an entire, hopeless, and impassable darkness; if time be not there, it is only because time cannot be a fitting measure for the sufferings and the sorrows which have no hope, the woes which never end, the "worm which never dies, the fire that is never quenched." Such, then, are the plain statements which we deduce from revelation on those awful and tremendous questions. What fields of inquiry do these particulars call up before our minds! When we collect them together in this manner and show the negative descriptions of heaven in a grasp, we seem to

realise great and wondrous things beyond the grave. There are placed before us life or death—happiness or misery—the bright abodes of life and hope and joy—the dark mansions of misery and despair. We are to choose which we will take; our present trial and probationary condition must lead to one or the other. Were such motives ever present to men's minds, they could scarcely fail to inquire seriously into the future relations of their present course of life with the destinies of eternity! It has been said that no one would offend God, and deliberately violate His commandments, were they to have an actual vision of the mansions of the lost—could they with their outward senses come to know the pains which never pass away—that none would be impure, dishonest, scoffers of sacred things, indifferent to the invitations, the warnings, and the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, were they admitted but for one glimpse of the glories which are round the immediate throne of God, and the splendours of the celestial presence;—that could they but hear for one moment the seraphim's song of praise and adoration, and catch one glance of the happiness of the redeemed, they would return to life resolved to win heaven, and to share the happy mansions of the blessed.

We may readily suppose such *would* be the effects upon the minds of those who were so impressed and so instructed through the actual experience of their senses; and yet what is the fact? How many there are who believe, or profess to believe, in the future sights and sounds of a lost or a happy condition as firmly as if they had seen them with their eyes and heard them with

their ears, and who yet go through life without acting upon the motives which such a belief ought to inspire! But just to take the analogy of the *present* life. How many persons are recklessly pursuing a course of conduct which, on the least reflection, they *must know* will terminate in misery and ruin! Men live and die regardless of the inevitable conclusions of their belief and their experience. All this may arise, and generally does arise, from want of earnest reflection and serious thought: men are deceived, and are deceiving themselves, by many expedients. They do not practise scepticism or call up doubt and infidelity to evade the convictions of Conscience; but they put off the serious and home application of their knowledge and belief to the circumstances of their own case; they will not seriously, and without equivocation, anticipate what their present course must lead to. But no one should *evade* the question, or shrink before its solemn and all-important conclusions. Let men be firm and honest with themselves. Let them realise those awful scenes of a future state of being. Let them live their inner life with Christ and *for* Christ, as they will wish they had lived when they come to die. In one word, all are now preparing for a future condition. This is an accepted time, this is a day of salvation: we know not how long it may be so; what a year, a month, a day may bring forth, no one can tell. The present moment only is our own. One delusion there is, which is practised by many upon themselves on this most important question. They persuade themselves these scenes of

happiness or misery, of joy or woe, are at any rate all distant and indefinite as to *time*. Conscience cannot but admit their truth, their scriptural authority for their coming to pass. But the tempter is ever ready to suggest the insidious question, "When?" It is all very well to speak of distant events and destinies in eternity; but how are we to prepare for events for which years and ages may have to roll away before they are realised, and practically to bear upon our happiness or misery? There is a long unknown period to come—death opens a dark and uncertain vista, which stretches between the hour of dissolution and the judgment-day; all may be true, and yet, for practical issues, all far remote and more like a dream than a reality. Our reading of God's Word has brought us to a very different conclusion. The future lot of the earthly pilgrim, whatever it be, is *not* distant; to each one the Lord is at hand. A very small interval separates us all between the present moment and the tremendous realities of eternity. The spirit that leaves us to-day is to-morrow cognisant of happiness or misery, of glory or of shame. And we say this because we believe it is a revelation of God's Word, that *immediately*—yes, *immediately* upon death—commence the foretaste and certainty of a never-ending future. When the spirit departs from the body, the next consciousness is of heaven or hell—of God's presence, or of separation from God. The *time*, therefore, appointed for our entering upon the unspeakable realities of the future cannot be far off; at the most, it can only be the term of our natural life—it may be in a far less time, it may be in

a moment. But, after all, it is not the distance of these great future events to which we are to look so much as to their CERTAINTY; this is the element which really affects us. The question first to be brought home to our own hearts, and realised to our own convictions, is, whether this *future* condition of mortal existence will be realised. We know how the question is answered by St Paul—let us leave the question in his own terms: "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: FOR THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD PASSETH AWAY."

CHAPTER III.

IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE PERFECTED IN HEAVEN THERE WILL BE NO MORE CURSE, NO DEATH, NO SIN.

WE have now collected and enumerated the chief intimations which are given to us in Holy Scripture regarding the future negative condition which shall belong to the inner or spiritual life of the Christian believer when the heavenly state shall have succeeded the earthly one. If, as we have said, we are to look forward from a life full of care and trial to the state radiant with immortal blessedness—if we are to anticipate glorious and *final* results of leading here a life of God in the soul of man—if we are to gather strength and determination to our Christian resolves, and add vigour to the efforts we make for winning the unfading diadem of eternity,—then, surely, we ought to dwell upon the real characteristics of that new state of existence which lies beyond the grave. If, in other words, we are striving to be *meet*, or fitted, or prepared, for the inheritance of the saints in light, we *must* examine well and carefully all that is told us of what the inheritance

is *for* which a meetness is to be attained, for which preparation is to be made. Nothing would be likely to act more injuriously upon our endeavours in the trial and probationary condition than any misconceptions on this point, any erroneous or inadequate ideas of what heaven really is to be. If preparing to occupy a new country, what more important than to know beforehand the nature of the land, the chief characteristics of its inhabitants, and the laws by which they are governed? The Christian believer, in this temporary period of his existence, must not confine his affections and aspirations to the period which precedes his entrance upon eternity. With every expectant of immortality, the *immortal* state must guide and influence the mortal.

Now, as we have said, there are several particulars which we have deduced from the declaration of Holy Scripture, in which, by means of negatives, we are assured not so much what heaven is, as what heaven is *not*. In heaven there is neither Curse, nor Death, nor Sin, nor Sorrow, nor Pain, nor Hunger, nor Darkness, nor Partings, nor Time. Now of these nine particulars we may make, I think, this distinction: we can very properly separate the three first from the others, as constituting a different class, or different character of description: these three are the abolition of the Curse, the deliverance from Death, the freedom from Sin. These seem to belong to the first principles of the condition hereafter, as the very elements and essence of its *nature;* the rest, wonderful and important as they are, may perhaps be considered as, more

strictly speaking, accessories or embellishments of the heavenly state,—most influential on its happiness, but belonging rather to what is *external* to the condition than to its own properties and nature. In one word, the three first describe the heavenly *constitution* of man's condition; the other six describe circumstances which promote its happiness and enjoyment, but which affect it from without. In this chapter, then, we are to consider what human existence will be when delivered from the primeval curse—when no longer subjected to death, when unstained by sin—and first consider the announcement, "There shall be no more CURSE."

I. When we speak of a curse, we use what seems an awful and a fearful word. To a parent's curse—the curse of the wronged widow and the ruined orphan—we attach even for this life the most terrible associations; but more dreadful is the association with the curse of God. There can be no question, however, that as Scripture declares that in heaven there shall be no *more* curse, it is clear that on earth there *has* been a curse, whatever notions or ideas we attach to the word so used; and it is beyond all doubt, that when man fell in paradise from the happy and innocent state in which he had been created, and when he disobeyed the commandment that he had received from his Maker, that he should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he incurred a fearful penalty, and that he and his posterity were involved in the saddest consequences. The declaration had been, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"—not, of course, the mere liability to die, but that

fearful second death which is always spoken of in Holy Scripture as the most terrible consequence of the Fall. In the Galatians the work of Christ is described in these direct terms, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law" (*i.e.*, the curse of the broken law), "BEING MADE A CURSE FOR US," as it had been written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to do them." And in 1st Thessalonians Jesus is declared to have "delivered us from the *wrath* to come." The sentence had gone forth, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake;" in other words, on account of man's transgression and disobedience a curse fell upon the newly-created world, which God had once declared to be good. The condition of man, therefore, since the Fall, and in consequence of the Fall, is manifestly that of having incurred the awful penalty of God's displeasure. He is under a sentence of condemnation. He is alienated from God, and far from God, not merely, you will observe, on account of Adam's sin, from whom he inherited a fallen nature, but on account of his *own* sin. Yes! man is separated by deeds and thoughts of ungodliness, of every day's occurrence, from the pure and the perfect One. The "wrath of God," the "curse of God," His "sore displeasure" with man, His being "grieved" at his doings, and various other strong terms, are made use of to express the natural condition of the human race as before God. But for all this an adequate, and more than an adequate, method of deliverance has been revealed through the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, St Paul describes the remedy

as entirely commensurate with the disease—the relief as more than equal to meet the evil. Where sin and all its baneful consequences abounded in the disobedience of man, grace and all its blessings did much more abound. "There is no *condemnation* to them who are in Christ Jesus," *i. e.*, who are sincere and faithful believers in His finished work and righteousness. If there was condemnation in Adam, there is pardon unto justification and acceptance in Christ. Such is the believer's privilege and birthright. It is his inheritance; for whatever penalty he has incurred under his earthly and corrupt nature, Christ is made a curse for him, and hath redeemed him from all, and given him a full invitation to be reconciled. But, alas! in this trial and probationary condition how often are these invitations neglected, these privileges undervalued—nay, these blessings practically *despised?* The inheritance of deliverance from the primeval penalty is sometimes not claimed at all. If claimed, or when duly claimed, and even apparently secured, how often do men draw back and lose the prize, and forfeit their inheritance—too many, like Esau, wantonly and recklessly sell their birthright and barter the privilege of angels for objects as worthless as Esau's mess of pottage. Now, the real state of the heavenly habitation and its heavenly inhabitants is this: the redeemed there are freed from the penalties of the curse, because it is itself abrogated—there is *no more* curse. The redeemed below have the offer of deliverance, but still there is the awful warning and needful caution, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he

fall;" and again, "It is he who endureth to the *end* that shall be saved." But who shall describe the felicity of that state when all doubt and all uncertainty on the point is gone for ever — when the wrath of God has passed for ever from the whole company of the redeemed—the sentence upon Adam and his descendants cancelled entirely? In the Church militant on earth, man is redeemed from a curse which still hangs over the race, and a method is pointed out by which he *may* avoid the penalty; but in the Church triumphant in heaven, the curse and its penalty and its wrath are all abolished. Now this opens a great and magnificent subject—this all points to a glorious consummation. We do not now speak of the mere suspension of the effects of a curse for this individual or for this offence, but we speak of the abolition of the curse itself for the whole body of human nature—we speak of the abolition of *all curse*. In other words, we speak of the close of the mediatorial kingdom of the Lord Jesus, and we speak of the commencement of the reign of perfect grace and glory. We must be well aware that we are now living under a temporary dispensation. There is sin everywhere, and the penalties and consequences of sin are but too visible around us and in us—a method of deliverance is proclaimed to the guilty and the lost—the Gospel of Christ is proposed as the remedy for the corruption and shortcoming of nature—a spiritual kingdom is promulgated on earth in the Saviour's name, and under the ministration and economy of His Church; but that kingdom is a temporary kingdom, adapted

to temporary ends and present objects and purposes. Christ is now a mediator between God and man, to reconcile the world unto Himself; but this kingdom will merge into the heavenly one, where an entire reconciliation is accomplished in all its members. We pray daily for the advent of that perfect universal kingdom; and the petition, "*Thy* kingdom come," will be fully accomplished. When the time predicted by the great apostle, in his magnificent treatise on the resurrection, shall have come—that is, when the end of a temporary and a mediatorial economy shall have arrived—when Christ, as the man Jesus, the mediator, shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father—when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power, and when all things shall thus be subdued unto Him,—then shall the Son also Himself, in His human nature and mediatorial office, be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God in three persons, and in joint efficiency and authority, may be all in all. This is the glorious and perfected condition of the kingdom of Christ, wherein there shall be no more curse. In the mean time, the mediatorial reign of the blessed Redeemer is steadily, and often without observation of the world, going on. Christ must reign on earth, as the mediator of mankind and guide of His Church, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. Of these enemies there are especially two—death and sin; and as the last enemy that shall be destroyed, we have now to contemplate another element of the heavenly condition, that in which—

II. *There shall be no more death.* This is indeed an *essential* element in the full happiness of intelligent beings; for wherever there is death there must be also that which makes happiness precarious and uncertain. Form an estimate of this truth from what you witness on earth. Let every advantage and source of enjoyment be poured into the lot of any human being—wealth, honour, friends, the most affectionate family and partner, health of mind and body, the world's approval, the love and goodwill of all — still there is ever in this state of being the drawback of a constant cause in operation which may at any moment cast a gloom over the brightest prospect, and devastate the fairest fields of human happiness and enjoyment; a secret foe is ever lying in wait, and may at any time come forward to spread desolation and sorrow in our path. Death comes to all. He enters every dwelling, the highest and the lowest. He destroys happiness, and spreads consternation through the palace and the cottage. He boldly enters the busiest, the most public, scenes of life. At one moment his hand is upon the throne and the royal occupants of kings' houses, the next moment he is busy with the humble inhabitants of the retired and lowly country district. In all he is inexorable—in all he seizes the very materials and essential elements of man's happiness—the very sources of his enjoyment. Take the case of a nation's benefactor, a country's boast and pride —the man whose calm judgment, discriminating intellect, and powerful eloquence have guided her councils and directed all her foreign and domestic relations with energy,

moderation, and prudence. In the midst of his useful advice and honoured career—in times when his aid is specially needed—at a period when the political horizon is dark and cloudy, and when the eyes of all men are directed to him for guidance and counsel, he is taken away by the hand of death. A nation's tears and a people's sorrow evince how much has been lost. But take an example in a lower sphere, and of more ordinary and daily occurrence. Take the case of a united and a happy family. Every earthly blessing and enjoyment seem to belong to them; but the hand of death is stretched forth and takes from them their head—the mother by whose prudence they were directed—the father by whose wisdom and example they were taught, and by whose firmness and high principle they were governed, and, when need was, corrected and restrained. He is removed from his place by death—cut down, perhaps, just at the time when most useful, without warning, and hurried away from his high place of usefulness and responsibility. What a change! what a terrible change! Who can estimate the change such a death produces on those whom it concerns? who can calculate the loss? Then, again, see the honoured and devoted pastor of a large and happy flock, living amongst his people—the instructor, guide, comforter, and friend wherever there is sickness, sorrow, or despondency. Death comes with ruthless hand to remove him from his place; that place is filled, perhaps, by a worldly, careless, godless minister, even as St Paul anticipated for his *own* case when he parted from the weeping members of the flock

at Ephesus (Acts xx.) How active his labours, how unwearied his care of them! He had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. He had watched and wept and prayed for all, and yet he knew that, after his departing, grievous wolves should enter in among them, not sparing the flock; and so death may do for any flock of the Christian fold. So it may be to the liberal open-handed landlord who lives among his people, and is a blessing and a friend to all—the promoter of their best interests, temporal and spiritual—the orphan's stay, the widow's support, the generous benefactor, the wise and prudent counsellor, the firm opponent of disorder and of vice,—*he* is taken away by death, and his people have to feel the difference between the mild and liberal rule, and the hard, grasping, selfish master, who cares only for what he can take—nothing for what he can give. We look upon the world and mark what is going on, and we cannot avoid the conclusion that the great destroyer of its happiness—the sad uncertainty of bliss in the lot of human nature—comes from death, with all its consequences and results; and in this manner we are led to form an estimate of the condition in which there shall be such intruders no more—in which there shall be *no* death. In heaven will be no change. Death comes not to the happy dwellers in those blessed mansions prepared for them by the Redeemer in his Father's house. When they think upon the happiness of their condition, when they join the anthems of praise and adoration poured forth from rejoicing saints and angels round the throne of God, they will specially think upon the blessing of its being

theirs for ever. Into heaven no sorrow enters—*from* heaven no happiness departs. The fields of paradise were fair and beautiful; there was no pain, no wants—all had been declared to be very good; every sense was gratified, all was pleasant to the eye and ministered to the enjoyment of its inhabitants. But death and sin *might come*, for man's condition was probationary, not permanent. Sin entered, and then all was changed, for by sin came DEATH. In comparing the two conditions, then—the lot of the righteous on earth with their lot in heaven, the paradise below with paradise above, the best of what is present with all that is to come—as in that future lot there will be no death, so, thirdly and lastly—

III. There will be no SIN. Now, in treating *this* part of the negative description which Holy Scripture gives us of the future abode of the blessed in the presence of God, we would only ask any one to reflect for a few moments what even this state would be, with all its uncertainties of tenure for human happiness, with all its sickness, infirmities, and various physical evils, if there were *no sin!* What a change there would be in man's present lot! what a charm and radiance would be cast over his heart and feelings! Were all men faithful to their God in the performance of all their religious obligations and responsibilities; were all men true to their fellow-men, just and honourable and conscientious in all relative duties; were all men kind and gentle, loving and compassionate, ever ready to aid the needless, to be the friend of the friendless, to

promote peace, happiness, and goodwill around them, in honour preferring one another, determined to take no offence with any human being, but resolved to do to every one all the good that lies in their power and opportunities; were all men daily exercising the charity of St Paul; were all men filled with the love that no ill-usage could chill—the love that survived ingratitude and selfishness and wrong; were all men striving to attain God's favour here and to reach His presence hereafter, doing all in their power to bring others to the same determination, the same happy frame of mind and disposition;—then, we ask, would not the entire aspect of this world, would not the whole bearing and appearance of social existence, undergo a blessed and important change? If, in this wide world, we met with no human being less resembling the disposition of the blessed Jesus than did the loved disciple—he who leaned on His breast and imbibed His pure and loving spirit—we ask, What would be the change produced on the aspect of life? How much of what we suffer would be removed? Ah! it is when our happiness is blighted, our peace disturbed, by the active influences of that sin which abounds so largely in the world—when, shrinking from the rude violence, the undisciplined temper, and malignant passions of mankind—it is when victims of the hard cold injustice of the selfish, the avaricious, and the dishonest—when wearied of the heat and turmoil of strife, contention, and party spirit, where candour, justice, forbearance, and frank dealing are excluded, and where we cannot avoid at such times wishing that we could have the Psalmist's wings

like a dove, and flee away and be at rest,—then, oh then! think of the condition where there shall be no more sin, and of a home where there is the "rest that remaineth for the people of God,"—rest from sin, from temptation, from passion, and from error. In the mean time let us be patient, and by living faithfully and earnestly according to the rules and principles of the spiritual life on earth, we may make this world as near a resemblance to heaven as it can be during a trial and a probationary condition. We may be assured that all the promises of Christ's Gospel to His sincere followers, of unclouded happiness and perfect peace, will be realised. Yes! there is a keeping of a holy, happy, and perpetual Sabbath yet to come; there is a state where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest, because there is a state revealed to us hereafter in which there shall be no more SIN.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE PERFECTED CHRISTIAN LIFE IN HEAVEN THERE WILL BE NO WANTS UNSATISFIED—THERE WILL BE NO PAIN; NO NIGHT, NO SORROW, NO SEPARATION—AND TIME SHALL BE NO MORE.

In all our reasonings and inquiries regarding the future state and condition of believers in heaven, we should ever bear in mind that this is no question of an idle curiosity, or vain speculation on an uncertain issue. We should approach the question in a spirit of earnest inquiry and devout prayer, really anxious to know what Holy Scripture has revealed to us. We should abandon all attempts to push the deductions of our reason beyond the bounds which have been assigned to our inquiries by divine revelation. But, on the contrary, we should seek only to know just *so* far as God has vouchsafed to teach; to perceive and feel in our hearts the nature and fulness of heaven's blessedness so far as He actually has vouchsafed for us to know. It is most important, therefore, that we should ever bear in mind the following cautions and premonitions: 1st, To reflect deeply and

frequently upon the goodness of God; and to think how precious must be that inheritance which the apostle Peter describes as "incorruptible, undefiled, and as fading not away"—how glorious must be the destiny reserved for all those who love God, in a state of existence the true joys of which can only be fully and finally conceived when faith has merged into sight and hope into possession. And, 2d, When this great truth has been duly impressed upon our hearts, then to ask, in serious self-examination, Am I really *desirous* of attaining this great prize? From what I know of heaven's blessedness, heaven's purity and peace, am I seeking *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Do I, like St Paul, desire to forget the things that are behind, to reach forth to the things that are before? Do I *press* toward the mark of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus? And, 3d, We would urge that, in all our examinations and in every inquiry, we should next consider whether we are *preparing* for such a state, and for such a condition of existence. In pursuing the Christian life on earth, we should always ask our own hearts, From what is told us of heaven, are we training here for its occupation, its society, its holy services, and pure adoration? Have we entered upon such a course as may entitle us to hope that, this life ended, we shall be meet or fit for the heavenly inheritance? Shall we awake up from the sleep of death and see God? Do we, the more we know, strive the more to be ready? Does the feeling of our heart keep pace with the knowledge of our understanding? When we realise God's presence, do we bear in mind that only

the pure in heart shall see God? With such cautions, then, impressed upon our hearts, and such objects always in view—guarded against vain or presumptuous curiosity, and having before us the constant desire to *attain* what we inquire after—we may now proceed to consider some further characteristics of the heavenly kingdom, which are marked out in Holy Scripture as a negative description of that condition. Thus, we are expressly told of the inhabitants of heaven's happy mansions, prepared for them in a Father's house by the benevolent Redeemer, that—

I. They shall *hunger no more, neither thirst any more.* Let us consider for a moment how much is implied when we follow up the contrast here described between the inhabitants of an earthly and of a heavenly country. In the heavenly state they "hunger no more, neither thirst any more." In an earthly condition men are always desiring and always craving, always hungering, always thirsting. We cannot suppose that the terms are confined to the mere analogy with what are now ordinary wants and cravings of a human body, or that we should limit the expression to an assurance that in heaven the distress and suffering undergone by so many of the human race from scarceness or lack of food will be felt no more. No doubt it does convey that assurance; but then we know well that the expression hungering and thirsting has, in Holy Scripture, far higher and more extended signification than desire for meat and drink. Thus, our blessed Lord speaks of believers hungering and thirsting after RIGHTEOUSNESS. Again, in Psalm cvii.,

we find the announcement made of God's goodness, that He satisfieth the longing *soul* and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. Our Lord himself declared that it was His meat and drink to *do* the will of His heavenly Father. The expression, therefore, implies an entire satisfaction of all desires of the redeemed in heaven—no want, no longing after that which is not attainable, and without attaining of which there is a deficiency of enjoyment. The assurance that in heaven the redeemed neither hunger nor thirst any more, offers the negative to a condition which implies the worst of earthly suffering, the most sure source of earthly misery,—we mean that most difficult and most unmanageable cause of present unhappiness amongst men—the longing after something which is beyond their control—the weariness of spirit arising from a sense of unsatisfied desire—the hungering and thirsting after some object which they cannot describe—the suffering from some distress from which they cannot gain a deliverance. It is this sensation which often embitters the whole cup of human enjoyment; it rises up in men's hearts to make misery and dissatisfaction of spirit where every earthly gift has been bestowed in rich profusion,—health, friends, riches, position, freedom from all the cares of life, and abundance of all things that usually minister to its enjoyment. Still, with all this, how often is felt that aching void, that unsatisfied anxiety, which saddens the whole aspect of life in the midst of all appliances for human happiness! nay, often do we see it the cause of real suffering and anguish of spirit, so as to call forth a deep utterance of sorrow, and

sometimes, even without assignable cause, to prompt the desire for self-destruction. All this is unknown in heaven. There can be no doubt that such hungering and thirsting here—such longing after rest and peace—except in case of absolute insanity, must be referred to a want of realising the presence of God and the direct influences of His Holy Spirit upon the heart. The soul of man is searching and longing for what earth cannot give, and which can be found only in God. The remedy, therefore, is a closer walk with God, and a more entire communion of our wills and desires and feelings with the mind of God. Where God is all in the heart of the creature, there is no such longing, no such hungering and thirsting as give uneasiness and pain. Even in this imperfect state, when the presence of God is fully realised, and when the believer can say, in all confidence and sincerity of heart, with the sacred writer of the 23d Psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd, *therefore* can I lack nothing," the spirit can then perceive how repose and peace and rest are at last attainable. The soul has that which satisfies the cravings of the natural man; and we have no doubt that, under such consolation, the beautiful promise of the book of Job has been realised, "Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away." But in heaven all this consolation is secure and perfect. In the presence of God is the *fulness* of joy. There can be no want there —the cup is full. The blessed in heaven are so privileged by direct and open intercourse with the divine nature, so encompassed and penetrated with manifesta-

tions of Deity, that they do not require, as we do in an imperfect and probationary condition, the rites and religious forms of church institutions to open an access to God and the Lamb and the blessed Spirit of God; for the beloved saw in heaven "no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." There is not even the hungering and thirsting after righteousness which is declared by Jesus Christ to be a condition of the blessed in His kingdom upon earth, because righteousness is in heaven an element of existence with the blessed. They live in what is pure and holy. Holiness is not there a desire, but a full enjoyment. And all this may be applied directly to a doubtfulness or hesitancy on the part of human nature now regarding the fulness of their future enjoyment. It has, we believe, often occurred to some that their happiness could not be complete if they missed the presence and society of some who had been especially dear to them on earth—that heaven would be no heaven to them, in short, were there an exclusion from some whom they fear they may not meet hereafter. It is an ungracious thought—it is an unworthy suggestion. To answer the objection more fully will be our object before we close; in the mean time, rest on the assurance we are now considering—viz., that the redeemed in heaven "hunger no more, nor thirst any more." There can be no want, or feeling of defect in the heavenly mansions; there can be nothing to lament, nothing to cause mourning, anxiety, or regret. Oh, bright and happy days near the throne of omnipotence! Oh, calm and peaceful joyous

hours where Jesus has prepared for us everlasting homes! Eye hath not seen the glory of your condition, ear hath not heard the melodies of its triumph, the heart of man cannot yet conceive the ineffable perfection of its bliss. In our present temporary and probationary lot we muse upon the future, and prepare our hearts, with all their feelings and affections, in faith and patience, for that direct and unclouded union with God, in whose presence is the *fulness* of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures evermore.

Now, from what has been said on this point, we may see how *much* important and encouraging instruction is conveyed to us regarding the future condition of the blessed in heaven by means of negative description. In fact, in our present state, we need hardly desire more than the assurance that hereafter the children of God will have no wants, no craving desires, which cannot be satisfied—that their joy will be full and without alloy. After having such a promise made to us in Holy Scripture that, in regard to their desires and longings, men shall "hunger no more, nor thirst any more," we need not follow so minutely the *other* points of descriptions. Our notices of the rest may be brief. We may now be sure that no impediment will be interposed any longer to cause anxiety and distress. Thus we find the assurance—

II. "NEITHER SHALL THERE BE ANY MORE PAIN." Commentators, both ancient and modern, have supposed that this prophecy, or promise of a future exemption from pain, may have relation to some glorious deliverance for God's saints and children on earth *before* the general re-

surrection, and before they reach the full enjoyment of heaven. But, however that may be, it is clear the description refers also to the condition of the blessed in heaven; with them, assuredly, there shall be no more pain. It is needless to describe or define pain; it is too well known by sad experience, and may be so acutely felt as to wring the cry of suffering from the strongest and the bravest. But we have only to direct our thoughts to that condition where pain is *not*, a state specially associated by the beloved disciple with a state where there is no more "crying." There is nothing but peace and pleasure, joy and love, goodness and benevolence, through all the regions on high. Happy state and blessed mansion of the saints, when this body of infirmity and sin shall be superseded—when all the sufferings that irritate and disquiet the mortal frame, and provoke the spirit to impatience, shall be passed away—when there shall be no more uneasiness, no more restlessness, no more pain. But pain here produces more than mere bodily and local suffering—it causes depression and weariness of spirit. Pain, as the result of disordered bodily functions, affects the whole mental and spiritual condition of man, unfitting him for enjoyment or exertion. But no such sad and distressing feelings will ever cloud the brightness of the glorified condition. In the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the prophecy of Isaiah shall be amply fulfilled, "The inhabitant shall not say I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." In the economy of God's moral government and dispensations towards His

creatures, there is something very profound and mysterious connected with the fact of the very *existence* of pain in the creation of an all-powerful and benevolent Being. But especially it is important when we come to consider it as the consequences and penalty of sin and disobedience, and as the means or instrument for testing our submission to God, our patience and resignation under His afflicting hand. Still more awful and more sacred is the quality of pain in God's kingdom of grace and providence on earth, when we reflect how it was shared by the Son of God Himself,—how He took upon Him our nature that He might be *capable* of pain, even capable of death—that He endured such pain and experienced an anguish so intense and so overwhelming, in the garden and upon the cross, that no human language can describe, no human tongue can utter, no human heart can conceive what in the divine Redeemer caused the bloody sweat, the cry of anguish wrung from His human nature. This was the consequence of those sins *for* which Jesus, the surety and the substitute, bore such awful penalties. The experience of pain in this world, therefore, should always remind us of our fallen condition, should teach us that it is the discipline by which we are corrected, the training by which we are prepared for another and a higher state of being. Pain, too, should ever bring before us the awful sacrifice which was offered for our sins by Him who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, and for us endured the agonies of the garden and the cross. The assurance that in heaven there shall be *no more* such pain, should ever tell us of a time

when our own trials and our own sufferings shall cease —of a state where we shall see Jesus, not as the man of sorrows, or with the crown of thorns, but where we shall see Him in all the splendour of His divine and eternal nature.

III. But, further, we have an assurance of a remarkable external difference between earth and heaven—a distinction between the habitation of the mortal and the dwellings of the immortal. Of the new condition of the redeemed, we are told *there shall be no night there.* Now, it will be at once obvious that this is a mode of conveying to us a strong impression of a great change in the condition of human beings, to tell them that in their future habitation there will be *no night.* The usual associations connected here with the existence of night are those of darkness and insecurity—of a time needed for rest from toil and weariness and sorrow—a time of danger from the attacks of men of violent and dishonest purposes—a time for the concealment desired by the wicked, who shun the light because their deeds are evil—by the impure, the wicked, and the unprincipled, because their actions and purpose shrink from the day and take refuge under the shades and thick veils supplied by the darkness of night. To think of a world, then, *without* night, is to think of a state which has no concealment, because it has no alliance with what is sinful; it is to anticipate a time when man can fall no more; it is to realise a dwelling and a home where the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light thereof: and as here light gives cheerfulness,

beauty, and glory to all earthly scenes, so the idea of perpetual light is connected with a state where all is pure and perfect. But further lessons are conveyed to us regarding the heavenly condition by this description. For if we pass from *material* considerations associated with night, and also with the absence of night, to their deeper meaning, we shall always find the sacred writers using light as a metaphor to imply knowledge, holiness, and joy; darkness is the corresponding emblem for ignorance, iniquity, and sorrow. Thus evil deeds are "*works* of darkness;" the dwelling-place of the unrighteous, the place of punishment by separation from God's presence, is "outer, or entire, hopeless darkness." In this sense, therefore, to say that in heaven there is no night, is equivalent to saying that amongst the blessed shall be no errors or mistakes—no cloud of distress or prejudice upon the mind so as to weaken or mislead the judgment—no ignorance of such a nature as to impede the clear and unerring knowledge, the unspotted holiness and eternal joy, which shall be the portion of the redeemed in the presence of God. What a glorious, what a blessed change! In our present condition our feet may stumble on the dark mountains of mortal passion of human ignorance and delusion, but there are no stumbling-blocks on the hills of Paradise. Here "even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:" but in the homes of eternal glorious day, "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and

they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah, xl. 31). In one respect, however, night here, with its dark cloud of obscurity and concealment, reveals to us glorious manifestations of God's workmanship which we cannot discern under the light of the sun. It is at night that we behold the magnificence of the firmament and the wonders of the starry heavens.

> "That night whose mild dominion's silver key
> Unlocks our hemisphere, and sets to view
> Worlds beyond number—worlds *concealed* by day
> Behind the proud and envious star of noon." *

But in heaven no such obscurity is required for the blessed to see the glories of creation; they require no night to disclose to *them* the scenes of immensity; all the faculties will be so strengthened and adapted that the richness and splendour of creation will be ever open to their inspection; fresh wonders and continual joys will accompany the path of the blessed in his contemplation of God's works, which, like Himself, are infinite and without alloy or defect. All this should impress deeply and permanently on our minds what is conveyed to us in this description of the real nature and true character of that eternal state which is in heaven to succeed the Christian life and spiritual course of our earthly probation. Are we really preparing for a state of being such as this, where there shall be no night—where there is no concealment, no veil to cover deceit, impurity, or vain selfish thoughts?—in fact, no saint in glory would *accept* of any veil or concealment. Are

* YOUNG.

we, in one word, by walking now as *children* of light, and casting off the *works* of darkness, becoming meet or prepared for the inheritance of the saints in light—an inheritance of peace, of holiness, and love—a dwelling-place for the pure of heart, who there see God without darkness or a cloud?

IV. After such descriptions as these we need not hesitate to receive, in all its fulness and in all its extent, the joyful announcement that in heaven *there is no sorrow.* If all the causes which produce misery here below shall in the resurrection pass away—if the presence and the love of God will be made manifest to the redeemed above, without a cloud, without reserve—then will that happy condition be realised of a state from which distress and anguish shall be excluded for ever. There can be no doubt this is a world of trial, of suffering, and of woe—none are exempt; the angel of affliction, like the angel of death, has no respect of persons. He casts a shade upon the bright face of youth inexperienced in suffering—upon the furrowed countenance of age saddened with seventy years' struggle with the world; he enters the palace and the cottage; he tracks the steps of those who are clothed in purple and fine linen — who wear crowns and coronets, and whom all men wait upon with deference and honour—just as he follows the beggar at the gate, the homeless outcast, the wanderer in the streets. But in the *perfected* condition of the life of God in heaven, which now struggles within the Christian's heart on earth, all this will be changed. At that time shall the glorious de-

scription of Isaiah be fulfilled indeed: "Then shall the redeemed of the Lord return, and come with singing unto Zion; then shall everlasting joy be upon their heads; then shall they obtain gladness and joy; then shall sorrow and mourning flee away—and flee away for ever."

V. The promise of enduring happiness, therefore—the assurance of perfect freedom from care and misery, from bereavement and sorrow, comes home to every heart, and sheds a ray of light into every bosom. But in accomplishing this end the freedom from fear of *change* heightens the enjoyment. St Peter declares of the heavenly inheritance that it "*fadeth not away.*" Oh blissful day, to think that the time for the vicissitudes of fortune being over has indeed arrived! that there shall be no separations; that from heaven no friend ever departs; that we shall grasp the hand that is never to be cold, and look upon the eyes which neither age nor sorrow can dim, which death can never close; that we shall listen to the tongue which no time can paralyse or silence. In the paradise of God the flowers that bloom are unfading; the peace that is within shall be calm and unclouded. What is changeable on earth is IMMUTABLE in heaven.

VI. There is one negative description of what is to come when the heavenly condition supersedes the earthly, and when this probationary and trial state shall have passed away, which we have reserved to the last, as it seems to form a conclusion applicable to all that has been said, and seems to point to the mode or manner

in which the whole shall be consummated. There are many awful and stupendous revelations made to us of what will take place at the last day; there are great and terrible scenes described. A great white throne will be set; the Lord shall come attended by the holy angels and all the heavenly host—the cherubim and seraphim, the principalities and powers that are immortal. The accomplished and sainted Reginald Heber in his sacred poem of Palestine, thus refers in poetic imagery to *one* of the actors in these last scenes:

> "And who is he, the vast, the awful form,
> Girt with the whirlwind, sandalled with the storm?
> A western cloud around his limbs is spread,
> His crown a rainbow and a sun his head.
> To highest heaven he lifts his kingly hand,
> And treads at once the ocean and the land;
> And hark! his voice, amid the thunders' roar—
> His dreadful voice, that time shall be no more."

This is what St John, in his description of things to come, declares that he saw, when the end of this whole temporary dispensation had arrived — when the day of the Lord had come—when the heavens had passed away with a great noise, and the elements melted with fervent heat—the earth and the works that are therein had been burnt up. At that moment, and as the general resurrection, judgment, and final sentence on mankind before the great white throne were about to be consummated, then he saw an angel "stand upon the sea and upon the earth; that angel lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever,

that there should be time no longer" (Rev. x. 5, 6). This majestic imagery—this sublime declaration, is not to be considered as a mere announcement that time shall cease to constitute an element of all existence. In one sense time there must always be as a *measure* of eternity, and as a note of distinction for the succession of its several portions; but the announcement seems more intended to show us that time, as an element of a lower economy, of an imperfect and suffering condition, will cease. When we consider how many of our earthly joys are wrecked or annihilated by time, we feel that time in *that* sense, being no more, teaches many important truths, conveys many solemn lessons, and gives also many bright encouragements of freedom from present misery. The angel tells the assembled multitude that the time of waiting for the coming of the Lord shall be no more—there will be no more delays; the time of trial and probation, of temptation and repentance, shall be no more; the time of uncertainty and death, of rebellion against God, of the sceptic's cavil, the unbeliever's triumph, shall be no more; the time for the success of wicked, bold, and bad men—for the oppressors of the meek and humble, of the righteous and holy, of God's children, shall be no more. When, therefore, the archangel's announcement shall have been realised, all the doubt, uncertainty, expectation, waiting, which belongs to an imperfect lot, shall also be no more; nay, even faith and hope shall have passed away—all is become glorious *certainty*. We leave to every one's own reflections to decide what must

be the blessedness and the felicity of that state of existence where the temporary has merged into the eternal, where time can injure none of our enjoyments, where happiness near the throne of God is permanent in its duration as it is perfect in its nature.

CHAPTER V.

AN ESTIMATE OF THE PERFECTED CONDITION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN HEAVEN, DERIVED FROM OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE ANGELIC STATE AND THE NATURE OF ANGELS.

In the two last chapters we have considered some of the chief points connected with the great and interesting question of certain *negative* declarations which we find in the Word of God, and which are descriptive of the mansions and occupations of the blest, not so much by directly telling us what heaven is, but rather indirectly, by telling us what in many particulars heaven is not. Some of the most important of these points, some of these negative declarations, have been examined; and those conclusions have been deduced which seemed most distinctly to affect our present feelings, most forcibly to incite our wonder and elevate our hopes to a condition so blissful and so glorious as that in which there shall be no more curse, no death, no sin,—where there shall be no feeling of want, no pain, no night, no sorrow, no parting, and where time itself shall be no more.

Now, although we have dwelt so long upon negative

descriptions of the believer's life when perfected in heaven, as being most suitable to the cautious feelings with which all such inquiries should be conducted, and as the mode of examination best fitted to check the presumption of attempting to be wise *above* what is written in the Word of God, still, we would deem it a dereliction of duty, and a culpable indifference, to remain ignorant of anything that Scripture really *has* revealed upon a matter so essential to our present guidance, so animating to our hopes of final blessedness and glory. There are *positive* descriptions of the future condition of the blessed in heaven; and of such passages, as containing direct information, none is more striking or more distinct than the declaration of our blessed Lord to certain captious inquirers who asked Him a question respecting the future relation in heaven of a woman to the seven husbands of her mortal and earthly sojourn: "In the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven?" Jesus assured them they were altogether mistaken in supposing that such ties and connections of an imperfect condition would continue in a perfect one; that in heaven the redeemed "neither married nor were given in marriage," and immediately adds this positive assurance, "but are AS the angels of God in heaven." The word in the Greek has all the beauty and concentrated power of that noble language; the blessed are ISANGELOI—they are "*like the angels.*" Now we may surely say that, were we making inquiries regarding an unknown and distant land —were we desirous of knowing something of a country far removed out of reach, and from which we were in the

mean time debarred all access, but in which we were deeply interested, knowing that it would be our future and final home, as the promised land where we had the inheritance of an eternal citizenship, when the brief and probationary period of our *present* existence shall have come to an end—how eagerly should we avail ourselves of any opportunity of conversing with some of its inhabitants were such an opportunity granted to us; how anxiously should we look to their information on the nature of the unknown land; how many questions we should have to propose, how eagerly should we listen to all they could tell us on a matter so interesting to our future hopes, and so deeply affecting all our future interests! But should it be quite impossible to have any such *personal* communication with inhabitants of the distant land — should we find it vain to expect such visitors ever to cross the dark boundaries which separate our present temporary habitation from our future home —we would then naturally turn to any authentic record connected with the annals of our anticipated home; we should fasten our attention upon any authentic history of that country to which we could have access; we would ask if anything were told of the character of the country itself—any details regarding the salubrity of its climate, the beauty of its general aspect, the magnificence of its architecture, the glories of its mountains and its rivers, the gorgeous splendours of its scenery. But we should feel even *more* interested in learning anything of its *inhabitants*, anything concerning their occupations, their dispositions, their moral qualities, and their

happiness. And in the case of heaven itself, we should certainly, through such knowledge as we could gather up regarding its *inhabitants*, look to gain some sound and satisfactory information regarding heaven itself. We should desire to know the occupations pursued by those who are its inmates, the nature of their happiness, and some of the peculiar relations in which they stand towards God, as revealed to His redeemed servants in the heavenly places. Thus it is that all we can learn about the present condition of the angels in heaven is so much learned about the future condition of the blessed, for after this life is ended, the righteous are to be *like* the angels—to be as the angels are. Their position in the courts above will be so far similar, that St Paul, in describing the heavenly society, joins together the innumerable company of angels with the spirits of just *men* made perfect, signifying that they are to form one glorious and happy company, united by the common tie of the bliss which they enjoy, and the worship in which they join before the ineffable presence of God.

In forming our estimate and opinion, therefore, of the wonders and the glories of the condition which is prepared for the redeemed in heaven, the nature and endowment of the angels must always form an important element of our calculation. What they are we *shall* be; whatever be their endowments and their blessedness, we are to be like them. The imagination paints them in her brightest colours. We cannot conceive the powers, the magnificence, and the endowments of beings in immediate attendance upon the majesty and the presence of

the King of kings, doing His commands, and celebrating His praise. We may well suppose the surpassing dignity and grandeur of the angelic beings, when we find St John would twice, had he not been prevented, have fallen down to worship before the feet of angels who were showing him things to come.

Milton, who has soared to heaven on so bold a wing, and who, in such sublime strains, has sung of heavenly things, thus describes Raphael the archangel in his appearance upon earth on a special mission from the courts of heaven :—

> "A seraph winged : six wings he wore, to shade
> His lineaments divine; the pair that clad
> Each shoulder broad came mantling o'er his breast
> With regal ornament; the middle pair
> Girt like a starry zone his waist, and round
> Skirted his loins and thighs with downy gold
> And colours dipped in heaven; the third his feet
> Shadowed from either heel with feathered mail,
> Sky-tinctured grain. Like Maia's son he stood,
> And shook his plumes, that heavenly fragrance filled
> The circuit wide." *

But to pass from the realms of poetry and imagination to what is tangible and revealed in this important question. In taking a practical view of the revelations made to us in Holy Scripture of the nature and condition of the holy angels, it appears that there are three considerations connected with the question, and which may tend to make it effectual in giving us assistance and information regarding our own future and undying condition. Now, by dwelling on what is revealed to us

* *Paradise Lost*, V. 277.

of the angelic life, we may conclude, 1st, that heaven is a condition of activity, and not a state of mere repose and contemplation; 2d, that heaven is a condition of adoration, of blessing, and of praise; 3d, that angels are the best teachers in showing us the nature of our high privileges, and in giving encouragement to our efforts in attaining their happiness and sharing their inheritance.

I. It is perhaps a common error to consider the state of the blessed hereafter too much in the light of an abstraction. There is a notion of mere mental contemplation without active employment which is far from being attractive, which is indeed chilling and repulsive. To form an idea of a perfect state of future happiness and enjoyment, we must connect it in some degree with what we know of happiness here, and so far look for a resemblance between the future and the present, as to bear in mind always that man's nature craves for a union of rest and labour, of active occupation and mental reflection. A state of pure inaction, except as an alternation with labour, can never convey the full and defined idea of perfect enjoyment. Now this question as regards man's future condition and employment, is at once answered by reference to what is actually revealed concerning angels, whose future condition and employments men are to resemble. Those happy and holy beings are always in full employment under the commands of the Creator and great Head of the family of the universe. They are employed to do His pleasure and execute His commands. They are always thus spoken of in connection with the moral government of God and

His rule in providence and grace. Angels were in attendance when God laid the foundations of the world; they saw the marvellous work accomplished, when God created the heavens and the earth; and when He said, "Let there be light, and there was light," those sons of God sent forth their acclamations of praise and wonder. They were in frequent attendance on mankind under the Mosaic economy—they announced the birth both of John the Baptist and of Jesus Christ—they proclaimed the birth of the Saviour at Bethlehem, and celebrated the mighty event which was to bring glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and goodwill to men, by anthems in the sky. Angels frequently were in attendance upon our Lord during the course of His earthly sojourn, and ministered to Him in His sufferings and His agonies; they announced His resurrection to the disciples, told them of His ascension to heaven; and from many passages it is quite clear that they will all accompany the Lord when He comes to judgment, and, by a bright and terrible array, will give an inconceivable magnificence and unearthly splendour to the great assize. From all this we would conclude that, if in another and a heavenly condition we are to be *like the angels,* we shall have bodily occupations as well as spiritual services of devotional exercise—that employment for God, and for each other, will be provided to the blest, so that every desire of man's nature which is essential to his happiness will be called forth and satisfied. Rest there will be, but it is rest from sorrow and from all painful toil, from all *weary* labour and distressing

anxieties; occupation, and active occupation, in a happy circle of duties to God, the great father of the heavenly family, and to the blessed, who are *His* children and *our* brethren in a glorified happiness; this we learn from what is revealed to us of the *angels*, and it is quite in accordance with all the analogies of God's dealings with us here as a preparation for eternity. He is training us whilst we are in a condition of trial by an active life of duty for the enjoyment and occupations of a glorified condition, and therefore, to adopt the language of the acute and powerful reasoning of the Archbishop of Dublin, "it would be strange indeed if all the habits of active benevolence which the Christian has been assiduously forming throughout his whole life while looking for and preparing for a state of future bliss, were to be at once laid aside, and indeed totally changed and reversed so soon as he enters on that state; and he were immediately to become a totally different kind of being from what he has been labouring to become here below, and were to exchange his character of beneficent exertion for that of indolent and contented apathy." *

The active occupation that implies doing God service —that is entered upon to gain the knowledge of God's moral character and a deeper acquaintance with His glorious works—that is called forth in acts of kindness and in conferring benefits upon our brethren—can never cease on earth or heaven. The difference is, that in heaven these occupations will be shared with the holy angels and the spirits of just men made *like* the angels

* WHATELY, *On Angels*, p. 27.

—that they will be exercised in a perfect economy, and therefore supplied with all the means and motives which constitute a happiness without allowing of sin or error.

II. But besides such happy occupation, and besides such active services rendered to God and men by these glorious beings, one circumstance regarding their condition is also clearly revealed to us in Holy Scripture, and that is, their constant *devotional* employment in praising God and offering before the eternal throne the blessing, and honour, and thanksgiving which redeemed and immortal creatures pour forth when in His own immediate presence, and when they feel the happiness of full communion with His Spirit, and of full communication from His bliss and glory. To be like the angels, therefore, is to be occupied with the worship and praise of God, to have no enjoyment more intense, no occupation more delightful, than that willing but awful celebration of the goodness and greatness of the Lord God which becomes those who know Him as He is revealed in the courts of His heavenly habitation. We find a very sublime description of this angelic adoration recorded in the book of the prophet Isaiah (vi. 1.) There was vouchsafed to him a vision of scenes near the divine presence. He saw "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above the throne stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory."

Now this description answers to the idea of beings under the influence of an adoring love and grateful spirit of praise tempered by that sacred awe which must ever accompany the offering of the creature to the Creator—the approaches of the imperfect and the finite to the infinite and the perfect. The descriptions of the devotional offerings poured forth before the eternal majesty of heaven's high throne, and which St John saw and heard when in vision on the lonely isle of Patmos, are almost overpowering. The most indifferent could not read them unmoved, as, for example, when in the fifth chapter he thus describes the worship of the blessed: "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

We have heard much, lately, of grand musical performances in commemoration of the works and genius of the most sublime composer the world ever knew, and no doubt some of those stupendous choruses which Handel associated with many of the most striking passages of Holy Scripture were, as then performed, the nearest

approach to the chorus of angels and seraphs heard by St John in heaven. But what can the noblest sacred strains on earth be in comparison with the new song of the heavenly host,—where cherubim and seraphim praise God in His own immediate presence—where angels unnumbered join that sublime chorus, of whom the lowest in rank is greater in dignity than the highest earthly monarch—more devoted than the most exalted earthly saint? When speaking of the Christian's inner life on earth, we have already referred to the spirit of devotion and the enjoyment of the sacred exercise of praising God, as a proof, an indication, of the spiritual life having been actually and sincerely commenced in the heart of the believer. We must conclude, therefore, that what forms the most essential element of the divine life on earth, when under trial and probation, will constitute the glory and the crown of that same life, when it is delivered from the power of sin, and uncontaminated by the debasing influences of impure and earthly passions. We may, therefore, so far judge of our fitness and training for the condition of the blessed above, where men will be like the angels, by the delight with which we join in the services of the sanctuary of God's praises here below. How *can* we expect to share the hallelujahs of the redeemed hereafter in the church triumphant in heaven, when our hearts have been indifferent or cold to the devotional exercises of the church militant in earth? In fact, to make earth most resemble heaven—to make men below most like the angels above—would be to make the praise and worship of God the

leading thought and predominating feeling through the hearts of all mankind. If *we* here on earth had in fact anything like the impression on our hearts which is felt by the seraphic beings near the throne, we could not refrain from pouring forth the joyful tide of our acclamations of gratitude and praise — our natural desire would be in this respect to resemble angels; and we would of ourselves aspire to their fervour of devotion and of love. We should with trembling anxiety adopt the language and the spirit of that sublime burst of praise, which we too often repeat in our service of the holy Communion with imperfect appreciation of its glorious aspirations. Yes! then with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we should truly laud and magnify the glorious name; evermore praising Him as indeed the Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; the Lord who fills heaven and earth with His glory—the most High, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Now there is a remark which we are extremely desirous of impressing upon the minds of those who are engaged in considering this subject of the devotional exercises of the heavenly state, and who are looking forward to taking their part in them with the holy angels. It is this—We conceive most erroneously of those praises which are heard before the throne of God and of the Lamb, when we consider them as a mere offering of *duty*, or as the mere performance of a service appointed by God, and required from His creatures. No! we would say of them, they are the spontaneous utterance of feel-

ings which cannot be restrained—the outward expression of emotions which cannot be confined within the breast of the glorified and happy servants of God. It is a cold and unsatisfactory notion of the believer's future resemblance to the angels, to represent him as one who goes to join in *their* worship — that he partakes in a duty and shares an office which belongs to *them*. We are sure this has often been injurious to men's ideas of heaven's real state. What we should bear in mind is this,—the glorified *saint* in heaven praises God because he is himself in perfect happiness. The new song of the redeemed is *simply* the utterance of felt devotional emotions—it is the expression of the raptures which are already glowing within the heart. Perhaps the greatest happiness of which an intelligent being is capable, is at the moment when he is pouring forth from the depths of an exulting spirit the utterance of his love and of his own intense feeling of grateful praise; and therefore to say that the believer's state in heaven is a state of rapturous and grateful adoration, only expresses the consummation of his own enjoyment, only proves the perfection of his own blessedness.

III. The more we think of angelic beings, and of their happy state and condition above, the more we shall perceive how much we learn by a contemplation of their present attributes and nature. From incidental references in Holy Scripture, we are led to conclude that, like ourselves, angels have been subjected to the test of *trial*, and have passed through the state of probation to which we are now subjected. Like men, they were creat-

ed innocent and happy, but we are distinctly assured by St Jude in his epistle, that of the angels some kept not their first estate—*i.e.*, fell from a previous and purer condition. The others, therefore, who are described as being in heaven near to the throne of God, doing His service as ministering spirits, and celebrating His praises in a song of perpetual joy and adoration,—of those we conclude that they *have* kept their first estate; that they are blessed for ever, and through the ages of eternity shall see God in happiness without alloy or without change. These are the beings when in heaven we are to resemble; and we do not know more instructive lessons or more animating motives than those which we derive from a contemplation of the present feelings and condition of angels, and of the likeness which we should now desire and promote. In fact, the angels teach us how to value the salvation which they have secured and which we are too ready sometimes to throw away. Our blessed Lord has distinctly announced that those happy beings are watchful of *our* spiritual condition, and interested in its safety and advancement; and He assures us that they rejoice whenever they see men return to the paths of penitence and piety. "Verily I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of God over one sinner that repenteth." *Why* do angels feel so much concern about the religious state of their brethren of mankind on earth? Why are they so glad to see an erring and a wandering child of humanity returning from sin and error to the paths of holiness and peace. It is because they know and feel the greatness of the prize that is to be won. They can

estimate the value of the salvation which mortals are so ready to despise, and keenly appreciate the blessing of the inheritance which so many are disposed to forfeit. They know from actual experience the stupendous privileges which men so rashly and so madly throw away; and therefore when they rejoice over one sinner that repents, they rejoice over one who is determined to avoid the evils they have passed themselves, and to secure the everlasting benefits and blessings to which they have themselves attained. What can, therefore, be more impressive than to look upon these great and solemn questions belonging to the future with just the same feelings and the same emotions as we know angels must regard them? If we are ever to resemble angels hereafter, we must now strive against besetting sins—we must strive against temptation—we must resist all the incentives of passion and of self-indulgence which would draw us from the path of duty, and prevent our attaining the happiness of the seraph.

In one word, when we consider the state and condition of angels above, we always seem to have a medium through which we estimate the happiness of the blessed and the horrors of the lost. Let us judge of holiness and of sin—of being for ever in the presence of God, and of perpetual banishment from His sight—by the rule and measure with which *they* judge; from a knowledge and experience superior to ours, of the blessedness of the one, of the wretchedness of the other. And, oh! to think that our spiritual interests here are *watched* by angels encircled with all the hap-

piness of the redeemed, and that amidst the blaze of their bliss and glory they can turn aside to rejoice in the repentance of a brother on earth, which is to bring him to *their* happiness, and to secure in man the joyous immortality of angels! What a motive for our striving that we may be like those angels now, in order that we may be like them in felicity and holiness for ever! We believe it has often tended to soften the heart of a hardened impenitent sinner,—we believe it has often formed a motive for erring man turning from his ruinous course to the path of piety and peace, when he thought of the fervent prayers and earnest wish for his conversion that glowed in the heart of a beloved parent—of an honoured friend,—and when he thought with what rapture they would hail his repentance and his humiliation—with what truth and fervour they might say, "that could they see this happy transformation, they would die in peace." Have we not all of us, therefore, a similar motive before us to cease to do evil, to resist all temptation to evil, to persevere in holiness and righteousness of life, in purity and truth of heart, when we consider the anxious solicitude of angelic minds that we should resemble them and at last share their lot? Our blessed Lord told His disciples not to despise one of the little ones of His flock, because in heaven their angels do always behold the face of His Father which is in heaven,—from which declaration many persons have concluded that every one has a guardian angel, an angel who watches specially for him, and is for him a ministering spirit specially sent forth to minister to him. This

closer and more personal guardianship may or may not be doubtful. The general sympathy and solicitude regarding our souls' welfare cannot be a question. What a motive to welldoing, to think that our errors and backslidings may perhaps call forth the tears of angels! that our repentance and return to God do certainly make them *rejoice* before God! Oh that men in this imperfect and trial condition were now more like the angels! At any rate, we must ere long be judged, whether our future is to be fellowship with them or separation from them for ever. Are we really anxious to be with them? are we desirous of profiting by their example? are we preparing for such society and such occupations as this? Let every one remember how soon he may be called into the presence of a mighty sovereign, by whose favourable judgment he may be admitted into a society of which the lowest and the least gifted member would on earth be approached with awe and admiration,—would be received with the deference due to a being of a higher and a more glorious position in creation than ourselves.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HAPPINESS OF THE FUTURE LIFE AS IT AFFECTS THE UNSOCIAL AND THE SOCIAL DISPOSITION—CONCLUSIONS ON THE FUTURE PERSONAL RELATION WITH CHRIST.

WE are now about to close our series of remarks on the inner or spiritual life of the Christian believer, as it will be completed in heaven, and perfected in happiness and in glory. The *subject* has been at any rate interesting and important,—it is no mere speculation, no field for fancy or conjecture; nay, it seems *essential* to our future hopes and aspirations that we should appreciate the condition to which we look forward, and that we should know enough of its nature and character to fit and prepare us for the occupations to which we are destined,—that our faculties, habits, and tastes shall be so trained, that we may take our due part in those dread scenes of ineffable splendour and unspotted purity, to which we expect one day to be admitted. It is scarcely needful to recapitulate the ground over which we have passed in the prosecution of our high subject. We have dwelt with sufficient minuteness on the various elements

which constitute the misery and sufferings of our present condition, and the freedom from which constitute a negative description of the happiness and blessings of a life to come. We have now considered some questions of deep interest regarding those who are *already* members of the kingdom of heaven in glory,—we have examined certain positive revelations which are made to us in Holy Scripture regarding the nature and occupations of *angels*,—which seems a safe and legitimate mode of arriving at some definite though very inadequate conceptions of what *our* condition will be, since our Lord has distinctly assured His faithful followers and disciples that they should be *like* the angels. There are many points of inquiry yet remaining on this deeply interesting question, on which we should desire further light and knowledge. But we must remember that, with our present imperfect capacities and limited knowledge, many questions must be veiled in partial obscurity till the happy day when faith is turned into sight, and hope has become possession and enjoyment. Nor, as it doth not yet appear what we *shall* be, are we justified in pushing our inquiries beyond the clear and distinct assertions and assurances of God's Holy Word,—though (as it has been well remarked) it is a duty to become wise *up to* what is written, it is a dangerous presumption to aspire to being wise above or *beyond* what is written. In this last chapter upon the subject which we have perhaps too boldly attempted to illustrate, we are desirous of elucidating a point connected with the general question, because it is a point on which, perhaps, a certain

misapprehension of the true character of heaven's happiness is most prevalent. The point we refer to relates to the *social* nature of the glorified life of the redeemed. The prevalent notion seems too much of the character of abstraction; notions about heaven are too vague, too dim, and too isolated from the ordinary sympathies of our nature. They suppose that the spirit in glory is a spectator rather than a participator in the happiness and occupation of angels. They seem to imagine something altogether different from the virtuous feelings and associations of man's being as it now exists. The new life of the redeemed in glory, let it be remembered, is the perfection and advancement of the life of the redeemed in probation and trial. It is not made up of feelings which are untried, and which we have *no* means now of appreciating. The common impression of the future state and condition is too much of one quite separate from the present—a state of new and undefined and vague susceptibilities. It seems taken for granted, that after this life a line is passed, where a barrier has been interposed between our state above and all that has been valued, admired, and loved here. All this is a mistake, as we humbly conceive. In their essential nature and character, we conceive there will be a far greater resemblance between the enjoyments and feelings of the virtuous holy life on earth, and the glorified, blissful condition of the redeemed above, than we are apt to suppose. Of course the change in the extent and degree of the happiness reserved for the righteous is inconceivable, still its principles and materials are the same—the love

of God and the love of our fellow-creatures form the elements of happiness, for time and for eternity, for a state of trial and a state of glory. And of this we are fully persuaded, that the humble self-denying servant of God—the gentle, loving, and generous follower of the lowly Saviour—the holy, pure, and fervent worshipper of the sanctuary of God's presence in the church below—will find that his new existence before the presence of God, and in the church triumphant above, is only a continuation of what he has begun on earth, and will constitute the perfection of a life which he knows already. Now there is one great principle which animates all our notions of earthly happiness, and in fact forms the very foundation and stability of the whole structure. We cannot conceive a full and true enjoyment of human existence except under the feeling of a participation in it with others,—in short, that it shall be of a social nature. It is, therefore, a most important inquiry regarding the happiness to which we may look forward in heaven, whether we shall find there this element of a full play of social feelings, and an interchange of the social affections. It is on this point, perhaps, where the common notions concerning heaven's bliss will be found chiefly to fall short. As we have often said, the happiness of the perfect condition of the believer in heaven, is in fact the continuance and the consummation of the believer's imperfect and probationary condition on earth; and hence the apostle, in describing the particulars and leading sources of future enjoyment to be revealed after the judgment, enumerates the coming to angels and to

the spirits of just *men* made perfect. What rich and abundant materials for enjoyment are here suggested to the mind of the thoughtful believer, in his anticipations for the future! To come to social intercourse with spirits of just men made perfect—himself made perfect also—no more infirmities, no more sorrow, no more distrust, no more sin! every doubt and scruple regarding God's character and dealings removed, every tear wiped from the eye, every want supplied, every care hushed for ever! to meet not only virtuous relatives and friends *perfect* before the throne of God, but to meet the approved servants of God whom we have never seen, but whose labours and virtues in the church we have long known! to meet the noble army of martyrs—the glorious company of the apostles! to have actual heavenly communion with the great intellect of St Paul—with the fervid energy of St Peter—the gentle and divine affections of St John—the nobly upright, conscientious, and practical intellect of St James! Oh! what shall be said regarding the happiness of meeting, in God's own presence and God's own blessedness, with all such servants of God? Then, again, reflect upon the future blessedness of rejoining in heaven the spirits of our own virtuous relatives and friends—the perfect and glorified spirits of those who had gladdened our existence on earth, and in parting from whom we had experienced those bitter pains which seemed to tell of all earthly happiness and enjoyment being lost for ever. To meet these again, where partings and sorrows shall be no more—to be united in the bonds of that fulness of joy which is in

the presence of God, and to share in those undying pleasures which are at God's right hand, without alloy and without decay! "If the mere conception of the reunion of good men in a future state infused a momentary rapture into the mind of the great Roman philosopher—if any such airy speculation (for there is reason to fear it had little hold on his convictions) could inspire him with such delight—what may *we* be expected to feel who are assured of such an event by the true sayings of God? How we should rejoice in the prospect, the certainty rather, of spending a blissful eternity with those whom we loved on earth, of seeing them emerge from the ruins of the tomb, and the deeper ruins of the fall, not only uninjured, but refined and perfected, with every tear wiped from their eyes, standing before the throne of God and of the Lamb, in white robes, and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, Salvation to God that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb for ever! What delight will it afford to renew the sweet counsel we have taken together, to recount the toils of combat and the labour of the way, and to approach not the house but the throne of God in company, in order to join in the symphonies of heavenly voices, and to lose ourselves amidst the splendours and fruitions of the beatific vision!" * But in considering this social character of the future condition of the blessed in heaven, and in holding forth such a promise as a stimulus to the pursuit of that Christian life through which alone it can be obtained, we must notice the bearing of the promise, that

* R. HALL, vol. i. p. 411.

heaven's state is a social one, upon two classes of persons, and must consider some circumstances connected with both classes in their reception of it.

I. The first class of persons to whom we refer as affected by these representations, is a class who are not supposed to view them in so favourable a light as they ought, or at least who do not very warmly respond to the promise of a continuance of the social condition in heaven. We refer to persons of an *unsocial* nature—persons who have passed their life with few of its sympathies being called forth,—we refer to the cheerless and the recluse. Their language, perhaps, if they spoke in entire sincerity, would be such as this—"I am solitary, and have been through life isolated from my fellow-creatures: I have known little of domestic ties and domestic relations; I have cared for few, and been cared for by few. The world has been a hard world to me, and I shall quit it without emotion, and scarcely cast back upon it a thought of regret, and without any wish or hope for prolonging any earthly associations or renewing any earthly ties. I cannot, therefore, honestly say that I anticipate with any rapture or even satisfaction the fulfilment of a description which promises a renewal, in the glorified and perfect state, of affections and sympathies which are said to give so much happiness to the probationary and the imperfect state. There is little source of happiness to me in the anticipation of renewing earthly social ties and earthly social sympathies. They have given no enjoyment here, and why should I anticipate from them pleasure hereafter?"

This is perhaps an extreme case, but is not an imaginary one; such cases are — dark, melancholy and solitary. But to all such we would in the first place remark, that whatever coldness and imperfection may have been attached to their career on earth, or however little enjoyment they may have had either from social intercourse, from friendly communication, or indeed from any of the domestic sources of human happiness, they may be assured that all this will be changed hereafter— that in heaven there can be no *want*, no defect in the full enjoyment of the blessed. Whatever has been deficient here will be supplied there. Not only will every cause for distress and anxiety be removed, but every avenue will be opened for the most complete and unfailing enjoyment. We feel assured that whatever unhappiness they have suffered here, whatever longings of their nature have been unsatisfied, in heaven it will be all changed. They will not hunger any more or thirst any more for sympathy and affection. They will, in one word, be HAPPY; the spirit will drink of light and joy, and bright and glorious sensations from the immediate presence of God; and from those admitted near His throne, sorrowing and sighing will for ever flee away. Of this we may be assured as a truth of general application, without reference to the particular circumstances of men having, whilst on earth, never known the happiness of social ties and family connections. There will be a complete system of compensation. All this will be fully supplied to them from the treasury of God's love and goodness. The case is, in fact, distinctly re-

ferred to in Holy Scripture—the defect specially promised to be supplied. In the future intercourse of blessed spirits with the Divine Nature in heaven, every feeling of anything like loneliness or isolation will be totally excluded. This follows from the very nature and character of the blessedness which must attend the spirit being present with God. In that presence is *fulness* of joy; and every feeling of happiness connected with the play of the social affections, with the exercise of the mental powers, and the entire satisfaction of all the virtuous emotions, is answered in the gracious declaration of Jehovah through His prophet Jeremiah, xxiv. 7, "And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; for they shall return unto me with their *whole* heart." Whenever we tell of the social character of heaven's happiness to those who have known little or nothing of such feelings on earth, and do not therefore anticipate enjoyment from a source which has supplied them little enjoyment in this world, we can at the same time give them the certainty not only of perfect happiness in the Divine presence to supply all former wants and deficiencies, but can show that *particular* promises are added to assure them that their future condition will suffer nothing of the loneliness and want of social interest of which they complain in their earthly course of trial and probation. Isaiah speaks to this very point in the fifty-sixth chapter. The passage, with its distinct reference to the stranger and the childless being brought into full social union with the family of God's own people, applies

directly to the privileges and blessings of the outcast and the solitary in the world's estimation, whenever they shall be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, and enrolled amongst the blessed, who receive light and joy from the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. To all such the prophet's language of consolation, of social enjoyment, and of a divine home, is immediately applicable: "Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name *better* than of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."

II. But there is another and a different class of feelings regarding the mutual intercourse and mutual relations of Time and of Eternity to which we would advert. There are persons who depend too much for their happiness and their interest in this world on the cultivation of the social connections of life. To them the chief and leading notion of enjoyment, if not the sole idea, is drawn from the ties of kindred. To them there is little impression of any happiness which does not flow from the relations in which they stand to children, partners, brothers, sisters, or friends; the consequence of which is, that too often the notions which they entertain of the happiness of the blessed above, is almost confined to the continuance in heaven of those relations by which they have been absorbed and occupied in this world. When earthly idols have been taken from them, their desire to be admitted into heaven turns too exclusively on the hope of possessing again, in the eternal condition, the society and affection of those who had been so much to them in

the days of their temporary and earthly course of being. Nay, we have reason to fear there are not unfrequently cases where the creature has so entirely occupied the place of the Creator, and the heart of the Christian believer has been so entirely engrossed with the earthly object of affection, as to produce the feeling that to him heaven would be no place of enjoyment—would not, in fact, be heaven at all—*without* those loved and cherished idols; that were *they* not there, the future state of the redeemed, even before the throne of God and in His own immediate presence, would be a blank, and wear a cheerless and hopeless aspect for future enjoyment. We have stated the case strongly, but we feel convinced that the state of mind is not an imaginary one, and, to a certain extent, may in some minds be far from an uncommon one. Where it has obtained any hold over the human mind, there can be no doubt of its being injurious to much right feeling regarding the future condition of the Christian believer. It shows men to be insensible to the perfections of God's own character, and most ungracious as regards His promises to them as being *His* children, and as in Him possessing all possible sources of happiness and peace. Every Christian believer should bear in mind, that however rich he may be in those earthly relationships of friends and kindred, which minister so fully and so tenderly to his earthly career and enjoyment, and however justified by the declarations of God's Word to hope that in another world and a future condition of being he will be restored to *their* society, and will (as David was assured of his lost child)

"go to them,"—that still this is revealed not as the great and leading promise regarding the heavenly condition—not as the sole or even *chief* element of its happiness, but as a subsidiary and collateral portion of the believer's future enjoyment—as an incidental and not a main source of our expectation that we shall be blessed and perfect for ever in the heavenly inheritance. No doubt the unchanging and absorbing idea of its *true* blessedness,—the paramount consideration in the believer's estimate of what God has revealed through prophets and apostles,—must always consist in his expectation of coming to the immediate presence of the eternal and unalterable Jehovah—of coming unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels—of coming to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all—of coming to Jesus, the Redeemer, Friend, and Saviour of the human race—to the eternal and divine Spirit of God, the fountain of all purity, holiness, and truth. From that presence, and from constant and unclouded vision of God in glory, all the happiness of which a created being is capable must spring. We do not tell you to lay aside or to discourage the notion of meeting eternally in heaven with those whom you have loved on earth, but we tell you to look *first* to Jesus as the Redeemer, Friend, and Saviour of your souls, and to feel assured that *with Him* God is prepared also to give you all things: none who are worthy of your love, and capable of making you happy, shall be absent. Where

Jesus is, there will be every friend who can make us happy; where Jesus is *not*, no friends will avail to make us happy.

In conclusion, then, there is one chief point towards which we would direct the attention of all who feel the value and importance of the social element in the future happiness of the blessed—that is, to realise the *personal* character of our Lord, and to receive personally the gracious assurance of His close and tender affection for His people. In fact, looking forward to meeting the Lord Jesus Christ, what is it but to anticipate, in communion with Him and in His presence, a personal exercise of Divine affection, the fullest and the tenderest of which our nature is capable? He was careful whilst on earth to explain this happy relation to all who should be sincerely and truly His followers and disciples. When on one occasion He was told that some of His own kinsfolk after the flesh were without, hindered by the press from a closer access, and desirous of speaking with Him, He took occasion to explain that the real kindred claim upon *His* affections and His regard was a true and faithful observance of His precepts and a sincere obedience to His commands. The passage which narrates the circumstance is one of the most precious and consolatory declarations of Holy Writ. "While He yet talked to the people, behold, His mother and His brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him. Then one said unto Him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But He answered and said unto him that told Him,

Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."* All that human nature desires and longs for will, in its glorified condition, be supplied in the Redeemer's presence and kindly offices. He will be for ever to His people as a brother and sister and mother. All that is social, tender, and cheering in the future state of redeemed and immortal man, must *first* be sought for as belonging to the Lord Jesus, revealed to us under those personal and close ties of kindred; and these gracious qualities in the Redeemer's future intercourse with His people speak to the two cases of believers we have been considering. Our Lord's words speak to those who, feeling their want of union and affection on earth, cannot realise the full happiness of *heaven's* social intercourse; but His words also speak to those who feel so strongly the ties of earthly kindred, and the happiness which arises from the exercise of human sympathies, as to make the continuance of their worldly affections and intercourse the *predominant*, if not the exclusive element of the happiness of heaven itself. Now, to the solitary, the presence and divine love of Jesus will supply all wants which may have been felt on earth. Jesus will with Himself give them all other relationships—He will be to them sister and brother and parent. But let us here add as a solemn lesson and important warning,

* Matthew, xii. 46-50.

that this unsocial and repulsive spirit in man which draws him off from human sympathies, and already separates him from human failings, is not a spirit in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel—is not a feeling *they* should encourage who look forward to heaven's bliss and heaven's occupations. And let all who are now making earthly affections and earthly ties their mainstay and rock of happiness, remember also that our Lord's words regarding His own relations after the flesh tell every Christian believer that Jesus is Himself the first and *supreme* object for his future anticipations of perfect happiness in the realms of bliss. He gives them an assurance that the happiness of renewed intercourse with spirits made perfect in heaven will form a portion of that fulness of joy which is in the presence of God, and will constitute one of those undying pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore.

We are urgent in pressing these promises and assurances of the divine Redeemer regarding His own special love and tender interest for His people hereafter, from the strong impression that the prevalent feelings and ideas regarding Christ Jesus our Lord are too vague, too abstract, and not sufficiently personal and affectionate. We let our minds be conversant with general terms, which draw off the mind from the *man* Christ Jesus. We dwell too exclusively on such terms as faith, religion, doctrine, church principles, orthodoxy, and suchlike, all right and suitable in their proper place, and right when applied for proper objects and

purposes. But when, in considering the question of the future happiness of the blessed, we come to substitute such notions for the Redeemer—Christ, both God and man—we substitute the cold abstractions of our faith, which belong to the intellect, for its living, breathing, personal relations, which belong to the heart, and all its affections and emotions. If there be one truth, then, which we have been specially careful in this work to keep prominently before our readers, it is, that we should consider the heavenly state and condition not as something new, or something unconnected with any other life, but rather as being supplementary to what is our present life, connected with it as the great reward of all its toils and self-denial, as the final consummation of its hopes, and the fulfilment of its brightest anticipations. We look to reap a divine harvest in eternity, but a harvest for which we have to sow the seedtime on earth. We hope to gather the fruits of the paradise above, of which we have seen the blossom in the gardens of toil and sorrow below. If men, in the progress of their Christian life, wish to gain a knowledge of the state of glory reserved for the blessed hereafter, they may gain more than they think for in the scenes of present trial and imperfection. There is more of heaven than men are aware of to be found in earth: not in worldly excitement or amusement, not in the great and gay and splendid scenes of the world's grandeur; but in the humbler walks of Christian piety, Christian self-denial, and Christian devotion—in pure love for God and benevolence towards man—

in meditating upon the wonders of God's kingdom of grace and providence, in the hours of silent and holy communion of our spirits with the Spirit of God and of the Lamb. We expect to gather sacred fruits from the tree of life in the highest heaven; but first, we believe, they must be watered with the dews of gracious love on earth, and ripened by the Sun of Righteousness arising on the world with healing in His wings. Let every believer in Christ, as he pursues his Christian path, remember to what he is destined, and for what he is reserved. He is to meet the Saviour of the world now in glory, and to be with Jesus, who is God and was a man, with all the feelings and the sympathies of a man, and who will receive him as a friend, a brother, a Saviour, and a Redeemer. He has to prepare for a perfect and a moral and social condition, with all the accessories of the purest and most lofty *devotional* feelings—with all the graces of gentle and divine affections. Let no one, looking forward from the earthly to the heavenly condition, confine his aspirations to future enjoyment of what will constitute the magnificence and beauty of things external in the new world, without consideration of what may be his *fitness* to share the moral loveliness of heaven's society—to partake in the spiritual blessedness of its worship and its virtuous affections. No doubt, in its external features there will be everything that is splendid in heaven; architecture of surpassing majesty and exquisite proportion, gardens of rich adornment and unfading loveliness, prospects of placid scenery, and shades

of deep and still retirement. There will, in fact, be opened to the eye the whole grandeur of creation, and there will be poured into the ear the perfect harmonies of the great universe of God. But beyond, and even surpassing these, the spirits of the redeemed will hold pure and personal communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons in one ever-blessed, ever-glorious Trinity; with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, with the spirits of just men made perfect, the glorified members of that spotless and glorified CHURCH of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. It is to this blessed and happy communion that we would direct every Christian believer's earnest thoughts. To this we would raise his warmest desires. But, oh, how sad it is to think that many, many redeemed and immortal creatures are passing through the pilgrimage of life—toiling with its cares, absorbed with its business, or excited by its pleasures—and that with scarce a thought about their never-ending condition of happiness or sorrow! With the Psalmist, we believe many good men could say that "rivers of water have run down their eyes for those who keep not God's law." To rouse men to a sense of such infatuation—to awaken a deeper interest in the invisible world and its glorious inheritance—to make the future predominate over the present—and to kindle an earnest, hearty desire to be fitted for a higher and a purer economy,—has been the humble endeavour of this treatise. May the great Head of the Church supply its deficiencies by the teaching of the

Holy Spirit; and may He graciously second these feeble endeavours to direct and guide men in following the steep and narrow way of eternal life! And may the hopes of dying a Christian DEATH cheer and encourage every humble believer to pursue with energy and determination a CHRISTIAN LIFE!

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